

# **BUTOH – BALLET**

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## **DECLARATION**

This work has not been previously submitted in whole, or in part, for the award of any degree. It is my own work. Each significant contribution to, and quotation in this dissertation from the work, or works, of other people has been attributed, and has been cited and referenced.

Signature:

Date: 08/09/2014

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## **ABSTRACT**

This dissertation explores intercultural theory through an investigation of butoh methods that shift performance processes of ballet. Theories of Post colonialism and Performance have been interrogated and applied to distill a theme, Butoh-Ballet. A qualitative research approach was undertaken for this study following a short series of dance workshops in butoh carried out on four members of Cape Town City Ballet company, in Cape Town, in 2013. This dissertation will show how butoh could contribute to overcoming colonial constructs, which have penetrated all spheres of South African society including Dance and its discourse. Dance research is fairly new in South Africa and largely situated within Contemporary dance. Ballet in South Africa has received relatively less critical analysis. The dissertation is particularly focused on expanding worldviews beyond a Eurocentric bias. Feminist notions as explicated by Ketu Katrak and Rustom Bharucha are considered in parallel to the philosophies of Maurice Merleau-Ponty. I also borrowed from Gayatri Spivak's notion of 'decolonising the imagination', to suggest that butoh may provide a means for ballet to re-imagine the body and its performance.

This study acknowledges my subjective, 'endarkened' voice that emanates from my hybrid identity as Coloured, woman, pioneer Butoh artist, in post-apartheid South Africa. I have proposed that butoh balances an external focus of the body found in ballet, with a more spiritually nuanced approach found in butoh. My argument hopefully marks the earliest reflective analysis of the subtle shifts butoh could make to ballet in South Africa today.

*Yoroshiku onegaiitashimasu<sup>i</sup>*

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<sup>i</sup> A formal Japanese phrase uttered before individuals engage on a task together. Here it is written honorifically, and translates into English as, 'please be nice to me'.

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# **CHAPTER ONE**

## **INTRODUCTION**

### Background: Locating a South African Dance Scene and me

In 2013, this masters level study based at the University of Cape Town (UCT) School of Dance, set out to investigate whether butoh<sup>1</sup> (a form of Japanese contemporary<sup>2</sup> dance which I will clarify in chapter 3) is relevant to, and could be a complimentary performance methodology for professional ballet<sup>3</sup> dancers associated with the Cape Town City Ballet located in Cape Town, South Africa. I have found my investigative processes to “[challenge and analyse] aesthetic hierarchies” (Kirshenblatt-Gimblett, 2004, p. 43) in Performance and Dance given my association in performance and teaching capacities since 1993 with both UCT Dance and Drama departments. As a consequence, with specific reference to Dance, I have looked at how certain aspects of artistic forms have been upheld and attempted to insert my worldview of Dance that is also influenced by eight years of butoh whilst I lived in Japan, within these notions. In addition, I have tried to remain cognisant of the complex and layered con(texts)<sup>4</sup> relevant in South African performance works. For example, in writing about Dance in South Africa, one cannot deny the impact that British and Dutch colonialism, as well as its

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<sup>1</sup> For simplicity, Butoh will always be noted with a “b” in lower case, to indicate the dance style as it generally stands in the world as well as the action of the dance. However, a “B” in higher case will be used to denote the self-created term, Butoh-Ballet.

<sup>2</sup> With contemporary dance I am referring to dance performance created in response to classical ballet at the beginning of the twentieth century. Unlike ballet, contemporary dance performances are not restricted to a particular set of movements and could include a range of performance techniques, like singing and acting.

<sup>3</sup> For simplicity, ballet will always be noted with “b” in lower case, to indicate the dance style as it generally stands in the world as well as the action of the dance. However a “B” in higher case will be used to denote the self-created term, Butoh-Ballet.

<sup>4</sup> I am positioning texts according to Spivak’s reference to Derrida’s argument that includes meaningful “historical, social or political” agendas. Morton, S. (2003). *Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak* (Taylor & Francis e-Library, 2004 ed.). London and New York: Routledge., p. 56

offshoot, apartheid<sup>5</sup>, has had. The South African government's destructive apartheid strategies deliberately subjugated people who were classified<sup>6</sup> as Black, Coloured or Indian (Adhikari, 2009). I believe this has shaped a common perception of dance styles in South Africa and resulted in the thinking that White people are associated with ballet, and Black people with African dance forms. But what if these notions were incorrect? Contemporary dance seems to be situated in the middle of these worlds, and is further defined by works leaning towards the classical, called neo-classical, or towards African, called African contemporary and unorthodox approaches to making dance.

Cape Town may be considered the heart of ballet in South Africa, with the Cape Town City Ballet (and its forebears UCT Ballet) being the oldest ballet company in the country. Dulcie Howes incorporated her studio, and later school and ballet company within the University of Cape Town in 1934 (Glasstone, 1996). With the establishment of the arts councils in 1963, the UCT Ballet became the dance company of the Cape Performing Arts Board (CAPAB) in 1964. It was then known as CAPAB Ballet. Since 1997 the company has been called Cape Town City Ballet.

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<sup>5</sup> Apartheid, translated as separatism, refers to the South African government system during most of the twentieth century that was defined by its racist strategies.

<sup>6</sup> This dissertation references race in terms of the South African Population Registration Act of 1950 that classified individuals as White, Black, Coloured and Indian, based on the government's description of racial characteristics. The races were on a scale of privilege and also lived separately. Whites, referring to people with European origin, were ranked at the top and showered with all socio-economic, cultural and educational privileges. Blacks, referring to people who were indigenous to various tribes in the country, such as isiXhosa and isiZulu, and also referred to as African or Native, were placed at the bottom of the scale. They received absolute minimal resources and were severely discriminated against. Coloured described those neither White or Native, and positioned in the middle of the economic scale, with preference given to those who were lighter-skinned. Indians referred to those of Indian descent. From my perspective in the Western Cape, Indians were positioned slightly higher than Coloureds on the socio-economic scale. My understanding of race today agrees with the theories of South African sociologist, Zimitri Erasmus (2005) and her claims that race is a social construct. Therefore, it is not about the prejudice of certain people, but rather indicative of the discourse that penetrates South Africa in all of its spheres. With this in mind, this discussion will refer to South Africans in terms of their gendered, race and class categorisations in order to disturb the thinking around privilege and suggest a re-imagining of ourselves.

The current honorary executive director<sup>7</sup>, Professor Elizabeth Triegaardt, claims it “has a proven track record of delivery of the finest in classical and neo-classical ballets, danced and produced by South Africans, for audiences in the Western Cape, South Africa and abroad” (Triegaardt, 2012, p. 17).

Notwithstanding the prevalence and impact of African dance styles, most of the writing on the South African dance scene has focused on ballet and Contemporary dance. The South African dance historian, Marina Grut's seminal work, *The history of Ballet in South Africa* (1981) remains the main reference for tracing the history of ballet in the country. However, it has very little engagement with any of the dramatic political contexts that contributed towards the development of ballet and Dance, in general, in the country. Beyond Grut's book, much writing of South African ballet still has to be done. Critique of ballet often relates to issues of race, as seen in UCT School of Dance former Honours student, Steven van Wyk's (2011), conference paper on how Black dancers could subvert the Whiteness of Ballet. Relative to ballet critique, more has been written with reference to contemporary dance in the country. These South African writers include Associate Professor at UCT Drama School, Jay Pather (2006), head of UCT School of Dance, Gerard Samuel (2010), lecturers at the University of KwaZulu Natal, Clare Craighead (2010) and Lianne Loots (2013), as well as dance critic, Adrienne Sichel (2011). Former contemporary dance lecturer at UCT School of Dance, Sharon Friedman (2009), has also focused much of her writing on dance education in South Africa. She published *Post-Apartheid Dance: many bodies many voices many stories* (2012), that presented the thoughts of eight (including Friedman) South African writers on a range of dance issues. Subjects included an overview of dancing with disabilities, by Samuel, and a call for a re-definition of African dance in the country, by UCT School of Dance African dance lecturer, Maxwell Rani.

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<sup>7</sup> Triegaardt has served as the Executive Chairman (1997-2004) and since 2004, as the Honorary Executive Director.

It could be argued that in relation to ballet and contemporary dance, the South African dance community is largely unfamiliar with Butoh and very little has been written about it. According to Sichel, two local companies have done Butoh based work. These are, Sibikwa Arts Centre's (2010) development based in Johannesburg, and First Physical Theatre (2010), based in Grahamstown. The founder of Rhodes University's First Physical Theatre<sup>8</sup>, Gary Gordon (2010) has also written about his experience of butoh in the South African Theatre Journal. According to my knowledge, this study that examines the impact of butoh on South African ballet has never been done before. I am often told that I am the first South African to have had such a long-term, close association with butoh in Japan. I believe that the cultural embargo<sup>9</sup> that lasted until the 1990s may have contributed to South Africa's exclusion of butoh developments on the world scene. On the one hand, it prevented South Africans from being exposed to concerts or related artistic activities by and with performers abroad. During this time, many South African artists that protested, such as the late singer/songwriter, Miriam Makeba, were exiled and were forced to remain outside of South Africa. However, I would like to argue that for many who remained in South Africa, this isolation allowed for the creation of authentic ideas and benefited artists who could rightfully claim an original stamp on their ideas. For me, visual artists such as Willie Bester and Jane Alexander and the musician, Brenda Fassie, are a few examples indicative of this fact. I also include myself amongst those who have developed a specific identity and personal signature in work that could be described as authentic. As previously written in the South African Dance Journal (2013), since 1995,

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<sup>8</sup> A performance company based at Rhodes University in South Africa.

<sup>9</sup> A political group, called the African National Congress (ANC), were radically opposed to the country's apartheid regime and in 1963 called on the world to boycott South Africa culturally. This raised a global awareness of the apartheid situation in the country. The cultural boycott started in 1963 and officially ended with the inauguration of South Africa's first Black president, Nelson Mandela.

my work [...has focused on the...] “stories of the poor and marginalised through [...] ‘different mediums of representation’ [...thereby enabling me to re-imagine] my Coloured identity” (job<sup>10</sup>, 2013, p. 131). Since then I have continued to research how one might be able to create a dance practice that investigated the body beyond the limitations established by colonial representations. I have consciously worked against the largely uncontested belief that White bodies are more suited to ballet and Black dancers to urban and tribal forms such as hip-hop or African dance. I choose to investigate dance from a metaphysical perspective, and expand on how one’s thoughts and emotions can create new interpretations and portrayals of the body.

With regard to my personal experience of culture, I have noticed how multiple external elements, inside and beyond my immediate community, including social, economic, cultural and political factors, have influenced my everyday existence. For example, I was born during the apartheid dispensation in South Africa in 1971 and classified as a Coloured woman. This meant that my primary and high school education was systematically designed to be inferior to those classified as White and superior to those classified as Black. The racial politics of the time forced everyone who was not classified as White to remain disempowered and financially lacking (largely due to sub-standard economic status), by limiting these persons opportunities to proper<sup>11</sup> jobs and tertiary education. However, the focus of my education at Harold Cressy High

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<sup>10</sup> In contrast with most Western cultures, I believe that the Japanese seem to be more focused on the advancement of the collective than the individual and often place themselves in a secondary position of importance. Pronouns are seldom employed in writing and speech, and when addressing another, that individual’s full name is often used. At other times, references to individuals are inferred. I also find it interesting that there are no capital letters within the Japanese language. The meaning of one’s name, rather than oneself, is important and at birth, special consideration is given to its spelling by choosing specific characters of the Japanese autograph, kanji. A Japanese student who was studying English once asked me why ‘I’ was written with a capital letter when ‘you’ was not. Reflecting on these thoughts and having a high regard for the numerous subtleties within the Japanese culture, I have decided to write my name in lower case letters. The American feminist, bell hooks, also writes her name this way.

<sup>11</sup> During apartheid, the Mines and Works Act (Act no 12 of 1911, amended in 1926), reserved jobs in relation to race and was acted upon by law.

School placed great credence in the acquiring of knowledge and significantly challenged<sup>12</sup> the status quo. Similar to historian and former student of the same school, Mohammed Adhikari, I too believe that my years at high school (1984-1989) taught me “key values that have informed [my] social outlook [... to acquire] the core value of non-racism” (Adhikari, 2012, p. 5). My formative dance years were at Jazzart Dance Theatre<sup>13</sup> (1988-1994), a dance training school that upheld anti-apartheid and equal opportunity values as integral to its creative essence/methodologies. Moreover, as one of my immediate family members had emigrated to Austria in 1983, I had a broad reference palate of different people that went beyond my community. As a result, I engaged with people of other countries and cultures from a young age.

I have engaged with several choreographers, teachers and performers in South Africa, Europe and Asia and during my eight-year sojourn in Japan (2003 – 2011), butoh greatly influenced my artistic life. I believe that it has provided me with tools to enhance my solo dance work and articulate my intention as a performer, teacher, choreographer and burgeoning researcher. On return from Japan, I wanted to test whether my experience of butoh’s performance enhancing techniques could be applied to different dance styles. With butoh sitting outside of South African ballet’s cultural frame, I wondered if butoh could influence ballet dancers in some way. It is not my intention to rework a classical ballet, such as *Swan Lake* in a butoh-esque fashion, nor is it to replace White dancers with Black dancers on stage. This dissertation questions

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<sup>12</sup> In 1985 South Africa was declared to be in a State of Emergency. Harold Cressy High School participated in national student uprisings. During this time students were mobilised in several mass rallies and many students and teachers were unlawfully imprisoned. It became impossible to continue normal lessons at schools and no formal exams were written. At the end of the year the government allowed academic promotions. In solidarity with the philosophies around academic excellence as espoused by freedom fighters in South African history, Harold Cressy High School unanimously declined the government’s offer of charity. Instead, everyone repeated the academic year in 1986 and after a period of legitimate learning and testing, moved into the next grade in 1987.

<sup>13</sup> Jazzart Dance Theatre was established in 1973 in Cape Town, South Africa, and is known for its anti-establishment choreographic works that incorporated different ages, genders, sexualities and races, at a time when oppressive apartheid separatist systems were rife.

whether butoh might be the tool for ballet dancers to re-imagine themselves in performance or in their processes leading up to performance. I thus set out to conduct a series of workshops with a sample group of ballet dancers associated with Cape Town City Ballet in 2013.

#### Rationale: A Case for Cape Town City Ballet and Butoh

The interest in associating my ongoing investigations of butoh with dancers of the ballet company in Cape Town, stemmed from four reasons. In the first place, it was motivated by a desire to challenge the hegemonic attitude embedded in the institution of ballet. This is manifested in its wide description as high art and general belief that its training establishes the best technical foundation for dancers engaging in theatrical performances of dance (Jane Alleyn, 1984, Kirstein, 1983, Lifar, 1951). This research had the underlying motivation of offering alternative, yet, I will argue, equally valid ways of expressing dance. In his book, *The Politics of Performance*, Baz Kershaw states that challenging the “ideological identity of a particular community [...] may enlist powerful forces for change” (Kershaw, 1992, p. 29). I agree with Kershaw and decided to challenge the codes of ballet with the esoteric principles of butoh. For example, ballet’s aesthetic of beauty is invested in precision, which can be seen in its distinct positioning of the legs and arms, often in straight lines. This seems to be in direct opposition to butoh’s attention to abstraction, imprecision, broken lines, or if one agrees, and introspective attitude. Yet, both forms entail an understanding of symbolic movement and music interpretation that is constructed in performance. This, I believe, has a primary goal of communicating something, or as Kershaw maintains, a common ideology of communication through performance that is focused on,

the reality of difference [between Butoh and Ballet could shift] into the appearance of similarity [...that could unite] them in their opposition, both to each other, and to those outside. (Ibid., p. 30)



Following the arguments of feminist theorists Esha De and Sonita Sarkar (Levine & Perera, 2002), I believe that this challenge of ballet requires “an entanglement with [...] power” (Katrak, 2006, p. 12). As such, I decided to introduce and insert my methodologies in a ballet institution. I set out to construct and collaborate in a series of workshops, that sought to challenge conventional westernised dance approaches and reveal the possibility of meta-ballet<sup>14</sup> in the world of Dance.

Secondly, I wanted to investigate whether (an)other technique, such as butoh, could inform and/or question the codified patterns made by ballet bodies, which unlike classical ballet, are primarily introspective and individually explored by its participants. Consequently, the third reason for inquiry asked whether ballet dancers could find value in an approach that fundamentally disturbed the aesthetic certitudes of their professional practice on several layers. Movements akin to butoh are stimulated through alternative perceptions of gravity, beauty, balance, as well as animate and inanimate life, to mention but a few. Further, most ballet dancers are conditioned to perfectly follow and execute predetermined choreographies. Dances are composed of a series of steps, each of which is precisely defined. This aspect leads to the fourth point of research that was intrigued by the question: What, if any, psychological and physical adjustments would have to be made by classical ballet dancers who encounter butoh?

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<sup>14</sup> Within the parameters of this dissertation, I use meta-Ballet to indicate potential ways of re-describing the knowledge and performance of ballet to oneself and others.

This research revolves around asking ever deepening questions around the following central question:

- How is butoh experienced by classical ballet dancers of Cape Town City Ballet company, in Cape Town in 2013?

In the workshop process, five additional questions were asked:

- How do the ballet dancers describe their physical and mental experiences?
- What do they describe as the triggers of their responses?
- How do those triggers make them feel and/or think?
- What do their thoughts and feelings make them do?
- How are these experiences different from classical ballet?

Primarily, I did not set out to gain definitive answers to my questions. On the contrary, the qualitative methods of research elucidated multiple perspectives of the same data. However, I did find the thoughts of post colonial feminist theorist, Gayathri Chakravorty Spivak, provoked further questions in me. In *Reworking the Ballet, American* choreographer, Vida Middelw, refers to Spivak's claim, "deconstructive practices can only speak in the language of things they criticize" (Middelw, 2007, p. 188). I wondered whether one might also consider a reverse situation? Would it be possible to conclude that "[constructive] practices [like performance and dance], can only speak in the language<sup>15</sup> of things they [which I understand to be practitioners] applaud"? (Ibid.). For example, as several dancers of other genres set ballet as the standard or marker that recognises their technical prowess, it is worthwhile to reflect on how shifts that occur within the performance processes of ballet effect other genres of dance? I will once again borrow from Spivak to articulate the intention of this dissertation and state that I am attempting a

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<sup>15</sup> I agree with Liane Loots (2010) and understand the body to be inscribed with text and scripted with social and political information. Furthermore, I consider dance to be a communication tool and as such, the term language could be used to describe different styles of dance.

“decolonisation [of] the imagination” (Landry & Gerald, 1996, p. 252), by setting out to discover how one can remain true and relevant as a South African artist on one’s own terms, without “[tailor-making it] for a taste that is essentially cultivated in Europe and America” (Pather, 2006, p. 12).

This was undertaken by analyzing the experience of five butoh workshops by four professional ballet dancers from Cape Town City Ballet. By applying the aesthetics of stillness and visualisation techniques of butoh, the ballet dancers were invited to challenge their perception and understanding of dance performance, as well as enhance their performance qualities. Instead of staging a modernized version of a conventional ballet story, the study proposes a potential evolution in the form by transforming the thought patterns of the dancers and thus performances of ballets. This investigation has put forward the idea of exploring the perception of technique and skill in lateral<sup>16</sup> ways, in order to create more dynamic and meaningful performances within codified forms of dance.

In Chapter Two, I attempt to review a wide variety of literature including theories of interculturalism and phenomenology, Dance and Performance studies, as well as ballet and butoh. This discussion also includes secondary information from butoh artists and ballet artists not directly involved in this study, received via personal correspondence. Several thoughts are thus interwoven in attempting to construct a wide perspective of performance practices. Chapter Three gives an historical overview of butoh in the world, including South Africa, as well as ballet in South Africa. Chapter Four frames this dissertation in the theories of interculturalism and phenomenology. The discussion borrows from these theories to articulate how Butoh could philosophically contribute to ballet

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<sup>16</sup> I use the term ‘lateral’ to refer to dance methods as well as theorising about Performance in ways that may be described as unorthodox, non-linear, imaginative and stemming from multiple sources.

in South Africa. Chapter Five describes the five workshops undertaken by four dancers of the Cape Town City Ballet company. For me, the methodologies described in this chapter are at the heart of my performance related work. Chapter Six analyses the experiences of the dancers and also describes the findings of the workshops. Chapter Seven concludes this dissertation and discusses the limitations and validity of the research, as well as signals the areas for future research.

Finally, I have attempted to hold a butoh spirit throughout this dissertation. With this I mean the dissertation travels through a series of different perspectives and insists on interrogating fine details that may at first seem far removed from the theme. Yet, within this comprehensive investigation process, points of harmony between butoh and ballet are gradually developed. The title, Butoh-Ballet, is a deliberate distillation of the oppositional qualities encapsulated in each dance style. It is also an attempt to transmit a circular transformative energy, that I believe, stems from difference.

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## **CHAPTER TWO**

### **LITERATURE REVIEW**

The novel, "*Midnight's Children*", by British-Indian author, Salman Rushdie, suggests a depth and breadth of exploration required in learning. Rushdie maintains that, "To understand just one life, you have to swallow the world" (Rushdie, 1981:109). In attempting to articulate my engagement with the fields of ballet and butoh, I have read across a wide range of subjects and made interconnections between political, social and cultural themes. By appropriating elements from a cross-section of material, I will explain how these seemingly separate subjects could be dynamically interwoven to help understand dance performance processes, and suggest why butoh practice may have value for ballet that is situated in contemporary South African society.

My research material included books, scholarly journals and conference material, as well as newspaper articles, personal interviews and email correspondence, and collectively they transmit the opinions of American, European, South African and Asian dance academics and performers. This dissertation emerges from an interpretation of a comprehensive range of subjects, including Post-Colonialism, Performance Studies, Post-colonial feminism and includes aspects of Philosophy. At first glance, the opposing cultural origins of butoh and ballet may be considered on opposite ends of a spectrum and any coming together thereof could be explained through theories of multiculturalism<sup>17</sup> and/or interculturalism.

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<sup>17</sup> I agree with Richard Schechner's explanation of multiculturalism. In his article, *An Intercultural Primer* (1991), he described interculturalism as a situation where several cultures co-exist separately. In other words, each culture maintains its own identity and is not respected equally, thereby perpetuating racial, political and cultural tensions and hierarchies.

I agree with the American cultural theorist, Richard Schechner's description of interculturalism as,

confrontations, ambivalences, disruptions, fears, disturbances and difficulties when and where cultures collide, overlap or pull away from each other. Interculturalists explore misunderstandings, broken messages and failed translations [...]. (Schechner, 1991, p. 30)

For me, as opposed to providing definitive answers, applying butoh principles on ballet generates “creative possibilities” (Ibid.) that could shift the social, political and cultural parameters in Dance. This chapter therefore commences with an examination of intercultural pioneers who have created work based on the differences between Western and Asian cultures. In this regard, Schechner, the American theatre director, Robert Wilson, the Italian theatre specialist, Eugenio Barba, and the British theatre and film director, Peter Brook, are discussed. Following that, the perspectives of people living in so-called Third World countries<sup>18</sup>, such as South Africa, are considered. In this regard, the critical thinking of Indian intercultural theorists and practitioners such as Ketu Katrak (2006) and Rustom Bharucha (1983, 1993, 2000), have been included here for their role in expanding my argument. This chapter begins by looking at Interculturalism, which is imagined as a vessel containing three research fields, namely, post-colonial theories, feminist and race discourses. In agreement with Bharucha who asks for a careful reading of the “contexts of differing histories of violence in individual cultures” (Bharucha, 2000, p. 17), I believe that one cannot avoid South Africa’s heritage of slavery and colonialism that deliberately subjugated the indigenous people. These racist policies were perpetuated in the country’s apartheid government and to this day, attitudes of White hegemony are still evident in the country’s education, social, economic, political and cultural sectors (Erasmus, 2005).

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<sup>18</sup> I find it interesting to note how the term second world does not exist, and believe that the jump in terms from first to third accentuates the great divide between the economically enabled countries of the global north (including Australia) and the economically, dependant countries of the global south. This reliance is further reflected in cultural and educational spheres on several levels.

In my view one also needs to examine colonialism and issues of race that are implicit in Dance in South Africa. It is therefore important to look at the seminal perspectives of Indian feminists like Chandra Talpade Mohanty (1984) and Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak (2004), as well as South African scholars Clare Craighead (2006) and Jay Pather (2006) in order to understand what is going on in Dance in South Africa. I agree with Craighead's reference to how the American feminist, bell hooks, describes American and extensible Western society, as White, supremacist and sexist (Craighead, 2006, p. 27). Reviewed from this perspective, ideas stemming from feminist discourse have been crucial in locating interculturalism in a third world, post-colonial<sup>19</sup> context.

Thereafter, this chapter moves to Dance and Performance Studies<sup>20</sup> and concludes with a comprehensive description of ballet and butoh in two sub-sections. Although Dance and Performance are not combined as one academic programme or school in any of the universities in South Africa, the theories surrounding performance applies to Dance and Drama and even Film and Music. It is in this light, therefore, that I have chosen to interlink the two fields in this section of the literature review. This discussion borrows from the Canadian scholar, Barbara Kirshenblatt-Gimblett, and her description of performance studies as "[an understanding of] the kinds of knowledge ... located in the body" (Kirshenblatt-Gimblett, 2004, p. 50). With this in mind, the discussion

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<sup>19</sup> In agreement with Graham Pechey's reference to South Africa and India, I am aware of and agree that the term postcolonial stereotypically denotes a binary and linear progression of a nation that has "gone through a transfer of power, or of belonging to the period after that transfer". Instead, he holds that the term "is only too often a polite expression for states that are both economically and culturally *neocolonial*" (Pechey G. in Francis Barker, 1994, p. 152).

<sup>20</sup> This dissertation separates Dance from Performance Studies as, in my experience, Dance Studies at the University of Cape Town is primarily focused on the practice and theory of styles such as release-based contemporary dance, African dance and classical ballet, and less concerned with exploring associated performance genre such as drama, performance art or music. The Drama Department of the University of Cape Town does however offer a series of lectures in Performance Studies to its third year students, which includes an overview of contemporary dance and performance artists.

then shows the contexts and connections between Dance and Performance Studies that could be made by the handful of Dance programmes found at universities in South Africa. *Reworking the Ballet* (2007) by Vida Midgelow, enabled me to compare the rationale of my desire to synthesise butoh principles with some ballet dancers and choreographers who had re-imagined the performance of canonical classical ballets in the West, like *Swan Lake* and *Giselle*. In addition, I found conference<sup>21</sup> papers delivered by dance critic, Adrienne Sichel, and young academic, Steven van Wyk in 2011, useful in unpacking issues related to the performance and perception of Black dancers in South Africa.

In researching ballet and butoh, I examined texts related to their specific historical and cultural origins, noted how consequent political and social mindsets of the past still influences us today, and cited recommendations for making positive social impact through performance. In contrast to butoh's relative unfamiliarity in South Africa, ballet has played a more prevalent role in South African Dance. The research of South African dance historian, Marina Grut, and the photographic documentation of Alec Beukes have provided valuable insight into local perspectives. In providing a Western overview, I also included the writing of British dance critic, John Percival, as well as the French writer, Deryck Lynham, in my reading list. I am aware of the perception of ballet that started in France by King Louis XIV in the seventeenth century and its subsequent spread across Europe. In the eighteenth century, South Africa was colonized by the British and with this link in mind, I believed that it was important to compare South African ballet with French and British or European ballet, as well as trace its historic trajectory to South Africa. Furthermore, the groundbreaking essay of Hawaiian anthropologist, Joann Kealiinohomoku (1970), was enlightening in its provocation that ballet could be seen as a form of ethnic dance. It helped to articulate my

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<sup>21</sup> This conference, Confluences, is hosted bi-annually by the UCT School of Dance.



thoughts around indigenous performances by the ballet company in Cape Town. As butoh is a fairly new development in Dance Studies in South Africa, the sub-section firstly gives a world overview of the form. Here the responses of interculturalists, such as Schechner, Japanese<sup>22</sup> academics, like Kurihara Nanako, and the writings of American dance theorist, Sondra Fraleigh, are included in the review. The chapter then locates butoh locally and refers to the writing of South African physical theatre practitioner, Gary Gordon, of Rhodes University, South Africa. I have also included relevant information that was shared in emails and conversations between Japanese performers and myself since 2012.

As my understanding of interculturalism broadened, I became aware of how my lived experience has contributed to having a particular understanding of performance practices and processes. I found connections with Bharucha's explanation of Interculturalism as the "translation and negotiation [of] the *in-between* space" (Bharucha, 2000, p. 10) by analysing my trajectory as an artist and burgeoning academic. A scrutiny of my historical, social, political and cultural context gave clarity to the motivation behind my actions, and highlighted my way of engaging with Dance. In articulating these ideas, I have encountered the field of phenomenology, which I have found to be most helpful in my research approach. The dissertation therefore briefly discusses the seminal work of French phenomenologist, Maurice Merleau-Ponty in the 1960s, via an interpretation of his ideas by American theorist, Robert Sokolowski. The sub-section of phenomenology includes their references to the confluence between butoh and phenomenology, and in a wider context, show what may be the interconnections between performance, on the one hand, and life on the other.

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<sup>22</sup> This dissertation will follow the Japanese convention of naming Japanese individuals with the last name before the first name. This follows the referencing in *Hijikata Tatsumi and Ohno Kazuo* (2006) by Sondra Fraleigh.

To summarise, the reviewed material is largely located under the umbrella of Interculturalism, which in itself could be seen as a sub-division of post-colonial theory, and feminist and race discourses. Finally, the section entitled, phenomenology, articulates how my experiences have provided a valid context to the development of my worldview. The various texts are not presented in chronological order and authors' notions that are discussed are not listed in any subjective order of importance. However, this literature review generally commences with the more familiar and widely accepted seminal writings and then includes more activist and non-Western opinions that, as Katrak writes, reflects a "different agenda, [...and] priorities [...] from [...] theoretical developments in the West" (Katrak, 2006, p. xxiii). Constrained within the extent of this dissertation, my thoughts are limited to the subjects at hand, although several other questions related to performance, which I believe are pertinent to my ongoing research process, began to surface. Finally, borrowing from the theory of intersectionality, as proposed by American scholar, Kimberlé Crenshaw (1989, 1991, 1994), in *Mapping the Margins: Intersectionality, identity politics, and violence against women of color* (1994), I have purposefully discussed the topics in an interwoven fashion. Therefore, my thoughts are often simultaneously reflected across several themes, which have added to the heteroglossic nature of this dissertation. It is therefore a deliberately multiple and cross-patched field from which I have extracted texts to explore and effectively articulate my critical question: How is butoh experienced by classical ballet dancers of Cape Town City Ballet company, in Cape Town in 2013?

## Intercultural Notions

For me, culture is a reflection of the ideologies, practices, values and ways of interpreting experiences, shared by a specific group of people. I understand intercultural identities to be more than an intersection of different nationalities, and believe it can showcase political, cultural and social inequalities and differences within particular groupings of individuals (Bharucha, 2000). According to a Western Eurocentric perspective, the theatre works of Schechner, Wilson, Barba, and Brook are highly noted as examples of intercultural practice. However, observed from a politicised South African perspective, they could also be described as White males, housed in cultural and/or academic institutions based in Europe or America since the 70s, which may have nurtured a racist stance. I agree with Bharucha's comment, "the possibility that racism can be nurtured in and through Eurocentric values should not summarily be denied" (Bharucha, 2000, p. 37) and found that his notions of intercultural practice have helped to shift my gaze away from Europe and find value in non-Western approaches. My research also revealed a phenomenological common point between these individuals. Each of them fused a range of academic skills, cultural knowledge and life experiences in order to create their works. For example, Schechner had a knowledge of sports and neurobiology (Harding & Rosenthal, 2011, p. 7), Wilson had skills in architecture and design (Otto-Bernstein, 2006), Barba completed university studies in languages and religion (Turner, 2004) and Brook conducted field trips in India and South Africa (Brook, 1968). In the context of Interculturalism, I wondered whether specific qualities were echoed in their collective work and possibly reflected in my thinking around the notions of hybridity, as discussed in my previous writings (Job, 2013). With reflection on the statement of the English physician, Samuel Collins, that "cultural identities are often defined by opposition" (Burke, 2009, p. 82), and reminded of how western approaches have dominated the arts scene in general, I realised the importance of questioning the content, methods and messages of these theatre-makers.

*The Rise of Performance Studies: Rethinking Richard Schechner's Broad Spectrum*, American theatre scholar, James M. Harding, describes Schechner's intercultural methods as "a collision and fusion with different cultures" (Harding & Rosenthal, 2011, p. 98). He explains how since the 1970s, Schechner has "[studied] and [learnt] the practices of ceremony and theatre" (Ibid., p. 203) from non-western cultures, such as India, Malaysia, Singapore, China, and Japan. His work along with the British cultural anthropologist, Victor Turner, has led to their being called the "joint fathers of performance studies" (Ibid., p. 6). In the book, *Performance Studies: An Introduction*, Schechner describes intercultural methods to be dealt with in performance studies and claims that it questions "embodiment, action, behaviour, and agency" (Schechner, 2013). Canadian scholar of performance studies, Barbara Kirshenblatt-Gimblett, discusses the field as being broad in its range, synthesizing "movement, sound, speech, narrative, and objects" (Kirshenblatt-Gimblett, 2004, p. 43). Schechner's theories in performance studies<sup>23</sup> has made a huge impact in the academic and performative content of drama, dance and theatre taught at universities in many parts of the world. Kirshenblatt-Gimblett also holds that the knowledge of performance studies is located in the body" (Ibid., p. 50) and adds that it "has much to offer to an understanding of materiality, embodiment, sensory experience, liveness, presence, and personhood as they bear on being-in-the-world" (Ibid., p. 50). With this in mind, performance studies is "intercultural in scope and spirit" (Ibid., p. 43) and an examination thereof broadens one's understanding of processes linked to intercultural performances.

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<sup>23</sup> In 1980, Schechner renamed the Graduate Drama Department at New York University to the Department of Performance Studies. Several versions of Performance Studies have been taught at the University of Cape Town's Drama School since the 1990s.

The previously mentioned Wilson and Barba have both drawn on their skills in other disciplines in order to develop their theatre making styles and philosophies. In *Absolute Wilson* (2006), the German filmmaker, Katharina Otto-Bernstein, describes how Wilson creates innovative aesthetics in opera and theatre by integrating individuals from varying professional, economic and social contexts into his work. In *Eugenio Barba* (2004), British theatre lecturer, Jane Turner, describes how Barba has been involved with theatre anthropology and his “[concern] with the principles that performers use to transform from their daily selves” (Turner, 2004, p. 48). At this juncture I found the provocative questions raised by Bharucha telling of how reductionist an approach to self-transformation could be when it ‘essentialises a particular kind of performance without acknowledging the hardships that may be inextricable from one’s everyday realities. In *The Politics of Cultural Practice* (2000), Bharucha questions the motives behind a young Rajasthani performer that was imitating the late American pop-star, Michael Jackson, and uses Barba’s term, “extra-daily”, in his interrogation. He asks,

what are the implications of abstracting this body from the daily circumstances of the performer’s life? Are realities [of the everyday life] of no consequence? What does ‘extra-daily’ energy mean to the performer himself, and how does it get consumed, and by whom? Under which circumstances? What is the relationship of ‘energy’ not just to the gods or to the body, but to labour and poverty, the daily grind of everyday life which is the condition of most Third world performers? (Bharucha, 2000, p. 56)

I agree with Bharucha and will attempt to investigate Interculturalism with consideration of the hardships that most South Africans are confronted with everyday.

Like Bharucha, I noted several elements that could be interpreted as a disregard and lack of understanding of third world performers when examining the works of Brook<sup>24</sup>. In *The Open Door* (2005), I noted how Brook’s generalisations of Africa and Asia could perpetuate negative

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<sup>24</sup> His staging of the Indian epic poem, Mahabharata (1985), has been widely criticized by Bharucha (Bharucha, 2000).

stereotypes of inadequacy and underdevelopment in those regions. For example, he claims, “[in Africa or in the East...] children’s bodies are not warped by city life” (Brook, 2005, p. 24). Brook’s wide travels in India, implied in the far reach of *Mahabharata*, made me hesitate to trust whether he really could believe that children in poverty stricken India were comparatively better off in the countryside and experienced less distorted lives. Moreover, six years prior to writing *The Open Door* he produced *Woza Albert* [*Rise Albert*] (Mtwana, Ngema and Simon, 1989), a politically activist protest play<sup>25</sup> that highlighted the racial oppression and lack of freedom of Black people in South Africa. Following the critique of Bharucha mentioned above, I wondered whether Brook might not at that point have realised how the everyday realities of adults and children living in rural and urban South Africa were warped by the destructive and separatist racial classification techniques of the apartheid government. In *The Politics of Cultural Practice* (2000), Bharucha further raged against ideas put forward in Brook’s *The Empty Space* (1968). Here, Brook’s argument, “In the theatre the slate is wiped clean all the time” (Brook, 1968, p.140) is challenged by Bharucha who suggests that in order for a space to be empty, something else must have been there before. For me, this comment has resonance in South Africa where Dutch and British colonialists have so readily disregarded and discarded the existence, traditions and skills of the indigenous people, called Khoi-san, Khoikhoi or Khoi (Adhikari, 2010).

I found further critique of book Eurocentric interculturalists in *Post Colonial Drama*<sup>26</sup>, by Australian theorists, Helen Gilbert and Joanne Tompkins. They compare interculturalists to parasites who “[take] that which seems useful and unique from another culture [resulting in] the dubious opportunity to *seem to have been* associated with a powerful and influential nation” (Gilbert, 1996, p. 10). To illustrate, I refer to

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<sup>25</sup> With the onset of the cultural boycott in South Africa, ‘protest plays’ as ‘protest theatre’ were prominent.

<sup>26</sup> Gilbert and Tompkins’s include Dance in their definition of Drama.

Bharucha's account of how a non-English-speaking Indian family from the region of Rajasthan, was dehumanized and humiliated in a hugely funded spectacle, *The Woman In Us*, staged as the formal inauguration of the University of Presidents in Mumbai. He describes a first dress rehearsal that occurred past midnight, where the exhausted child,

barely 3 feet high [...and with] a racking cough [...] was suddenly [shouted at and, like] a terrified automaton, [...] jerked his body into a dance [...] flashes on a charismatic smile, wiggles his hips, [...] and then is abruptly stopped. The child is reprimanded for his late cue, and he leaves the stage, a very disconsolate figure. (Bharucha, 2000, p. 55)

Bharucha compared this incident to a "human variation of a monkey dance"(Ibid.) Like Gilbert and Tompkins, Bharucha claimed scenes like these to be typical of Western productions that create spectacles with the good intention of accommodating the underprivileged local community and in the process, reduce performers "to skills, to the fodder of 'human resource development' [...] with its inimitable insensitivity to both language and people" (p. 56). I believe this criticism could be extended to how Eurocentric dance forms, like ballet in South Africa, may have the good intention to integrate indigenous dance styles, but in the process get caught up in patronizing sponsorship opportunities that seem to encourage integration, without investing sufficient time to interrogate the value and potential extent of such collaborations. I am aware that for some interculturalists their intention and impetus may be a meeting of opposing worlds. Bharucha describes this as "an elipsis of horizons" (Bharucha, 2000, p. 42), but encourages one to take into account the differences and inequities in the identities of cultural exchanges. With this in mind, I have found it useful to examine how aspects of post-colonial, feminist and race theories relate to and could potentially deepen one's understanding of Interculturalism.

## Postcolonialism, Feminism and Racism

Writing through the lens of Coloured, independent, female artist in South Africa in 2013/2014, this discussion inevitably explores Interculturalism within Post-Colonial theory. Early feminist writer, Carol Hanisch's, statement, "the personal is political" has fueled a politicised level of inquiry (Hanisch, 1970). Further, Gilbert and Tompkins' *Post-colonial Drama: Theory, Practice, Politics* (1996), described post-colonial theatre as having a political agenda, "[engaging] with and [contesting...] colonialism's discourses, power structures, and social hierarchies" (Gilbert, 1996, p. 2). One individual whom I perceive as a South African intercultural practitioner, Jay Pather, has directed works often resulting in political consequence. He has become one of South Africa's leading challengers of theatre-making practices and its aesthetics. In this regard, South African academic, Clare Craighead, has described his work as "[engaging] and [critiquing], national stereotypes within the South African context" (Craighead, 2010, p. 262). This was particularly evident in his reworking of Shakespeare's *Julius Caesar*. Renamed as *Qaphella Caesar* (Cape Town, 2010), Pather customised the original play to fit a South African paradigm by layering dance and music genres, the use of English spoken in African accents, filmic techniques, social politics and ironic representations of iconic South African figures, such as politicians and *sangomas*<sup>27</sup>.

Similar to the Western interculturalists mentioned above, Pather's multidisciplinary methodologies have been influenced by numerous factors, which include his Indian origins, exposure to different languages and overseas travels, as well as his schooling with Schechner in the 80s. In his article, *African Contemporary Dance* (2006), published in the journal, *Critical Arts*, Pather states that contemporary artists in Africa

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<sup>27</sup> Translated from isi-Xhosa it translates to traditional healer or diviner, and is tarnished as 'witch doctor' in English.



needed to develop new artistic ideas that are informed by “a life lived within and of our communities at this time and in this place” (Pather, 2006, p. 14). He defines contemporary work as an interrogated reality we find here, as opposed to an apology of ourselves. This thinking stems from Pather’s criticism of a reductionist and fundamental attitude towards African identity as if it is fundamentally one thing, and his work helps one reconnect with our lost and essential self. Pather suggests that African artists who acknowledge their tradition of contemporary dance as largely a response to Western standards are able to reflect a more self-conscious critique of their work (Pather, 2006). I maintain that further interrogations of this “reflex response” (Ibid., p. 14) might provoke imaginative ways of signifying the power and impact of African contemporary performance, such as *Qaphaella Ceasar* mentioned above, and my signature work, *Daai za Lady* (1995). Along similar lines, the British feminist, Lynette Goddard, asks, “What does/might/can/should a progressive black feminist critical performance practice look like?” (Goddard, 2007, p. 13).

Racial issues cannot be ignored when looking at the significance of post-colonial representation in performance, and around the globe<sup>28</sup>, feminist discussions about performers reimagining power often relate to race (Adair, 2007, Craighead, 2006, Katrak, 2006). I have also appropriated several theories to resonate my performance ideologies. In *Staging Black Feminisms – Identity, Politics, Performance* (2007), Goddard,

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<sup>28</sup> I observed that the work of feminists: Craighead, Goodard, Adair and Katrak were written around the same period, in 2006 to 2007 and believe that particular events one or two years prior to the publication of their books might have had significance on their choice of material. The inevitable interlinking of various phenomenon, which may include social, political and cultural elements, may have influenced the research angles of these scholars. Notably, in 2005, significant issues related to race and women occurred in South Africa, Britain and America. South Africa had just celebrated 10 years of democracy and xenophobia accompanied an increased migration of Black men and women from other African countries. In Britain, the Birmingham riots had occurred and in America, Condoleezza Rice became the first African American woman in congress.

discusses how decolonization can only develop with new ways of seeing. She states, "black humanity [...] lies within the power afforded representation as ideas have to first be present in our imaginations before they can be present in our lives" (Goddard, 2007, p. 5). With butoh practice, I believe, the presence of a particularly focused imagination leads to several kinds of metamorphoses and constructions of the body. With regard to having a specific corporeal engagement that signifies power, I was inspired by the writing of an Indian feminist, Ketu Katrak. In *Politics of the Female Body* (2006) she refers to the French philosopher, Michel Foucault, and his definition of,

'the mechanics of power', as its capillary form of existence [that...] seeps into the very grain of individuals, reaches right into their bodies, permeates their gestures, their posture, what they say, how they learn to live and work with other people. (Katrak, 2006, p. 48)

Katrak is concerned with creating a solidarity among women with a shared history of British colonisation. To qualify her non-romantic understanding of 'solidarity' she referred to Mohanty, who described it as a "complex vision [...] that is aware of every step of difference [including race], but that holds on courageously to some notion of unity" (Katrak, 2006, p. 42). For me, that unity can be achieved in the intention of one's performance, and from a dance perspective, the complete embodiment of a thought. In terms of performance strategies, Katrak and Pather are aligned in their proposed acts towards decolonization. Katrak states, "colonized peoples of color, [...] need] to take authority in revisiting colonial versions of history, and in speaking back to the colonizer" (Katrak, 2006, p. 50). Her perception of history and its intersection with geography transcends temporal time and literal space and place. In so doing, her thinking "opens up new areas of exploration – returning home through the imagination, recreating home in narrative, creating a simultaneous present, of being here and there, of being in the past and the present" (Katrak, 2006, p. 40). Adding Pather's notions of self-reflexivity, and in attempting to answer Goddard's question in the above paragraph, one might suggest that postcolonial performance in South Africa needs to move into a more spiritual dimension.

South Africa's recent history of apartheid that privileged White people and disadvantaged everyone else, has fed the volatile nature of race identification in the country. In this regard, Loots (2010), Samuel (2012) and Craighead (2006), have made a valuable contribution in their writing. Amongst several published works that include diverse subjects like: America's hip-hop influence on youth in South Africa (Loots, 2003), women and biopolitics (Loots, 2007), and child sexuality (Loots, 2013), Loots has written about the body as a socially and politically constructed text (Loots, 2010). In addition, Samuel's *Shampoo Dancing And Scars - (Dis)Embodiment In Afro-Contemporary Choreography In South Africa* (2012) discussed how hair is used in contemporary dance to "re-position the white, female, heterosexual ballet dancer as normative" (submitted to CORD in 2012, publication date pending).

In moving away from what the American feminist, bell hooks, describes as a heterosexist, White supremacist, and one-dimensional stereotype often afforded to Black dancers, Craighead brings attention to the dialogical nature of all bodies in *'Black dance': Navigating the politics of 'black' in relation to the 'dance object' and the body as discourse* (2006). She states, "The body is discourse [...], finds expression through the physical and visceral, [...] is constantly shifting and is never fixed" (Craighead, 2006, p. 28). I found the seminal writing of American gender theorist, Judith Butler, to augment Craighead's thoughts and further articulate my views on the relationship between the body and identity. In her book, *Gender Trouble – Feminism and the subversion of identity* (1990), she states,

gender intersects with racial, class, ethnic, sexual, and regional modalities of [...] identities. As a result, it becomes impossible to separate out "gender" from the political and cultural intersections in which it is invariably produced and maintained. (Butler, 1990, p. 3)

Further in this dissertation, I will apply Butler's theories to ballet dancers and pay particular attention to how butoh could subvert gendered responses that are socially conditioned. At this point the interconnections between the physical, political, artistic and environmental contexts of a performer, albeit a dancer or actor, have been considered. This discussion next moves to the development and influence of Dance and Performance Studies in South Africa.

### Dance and/or Performance Studies

In South Africa, Schechner's theories relating to Performance have "profoundly affected and enhanced the field of modern theatre studies" (Harding & Rosenthal, 2011, p. 22) and been integrated into several university Dance and Drama Departments across the country. I think that one reason for its impact may be due to South Africa's complex history and politics. According to Schechner, "performance studies is sympathetic to the [...] marginal, [...], the subversive, [...], and the formerly colonized" (Schechner, 2013). This section therefore begins with tracing the trajectories of notable dance and drama scholars based at different university institutions in South Africa. Next, the discussion borrows from Kirschenblatt-Gimblett's *Performance Studies* (2004) and hones in on South African dancers who seem to have applied an "understanding of materiality, embodiment, sensory experience, liveness, presence, and personhood as they bear on being-in-the-world" (Kirschenblatt-Gimblett, 2004, p. 50) in Contemporary dance performances. With specific reference to Dance, these examples will extend the interrogation of the nature of post-colonial performance. As such, the literature reviewed inevitably raises issues around race perception and representation in performance. This section concludes with considering additional ways that Performance Studies could continue to affect Dance to be "intercultural in scope and spirit" (Ibid., p. 43).

With regard to universities in South Africa, I noted how the foundational training in Contemporary dance of several Arts academics were philosophically linked to Schechner's performance theories. To remain within the constraints of this dissertation, I have not mentioned all the individuals who have made various contributions to performance and/or interventions in Dance in South Africa. It is not my intention to go into a detailed historical overview of Dance and Drama departments in South Africa, rather this section will merely cite a few key examples of individuals who have linked Rudolph Laban's theories of moving the body in space to Schechner's multi-disciplinary performance theories. The selected cases refer to individuals who had specifically studied at the Laban Dance Centre in London. This institution was founded by one of the pioneers of modern dance, Rudolf Laban, who according to theatre and dance studies scholar, Dunja Njaradi, was a "fervent believer in the power of...dance... which can transform lives" (Njaradi, 2012, p. 6). In discussing trance in Western theatrical dance, Njaradi expresses Dee Reynolds' description of Laban's dance as, "not about performing steps, but effecting radical changes in the subject through movement" (Ibid., p.27). Bearing in mind the anthropological element implicit in Schechner's philosophies, Laban's methodologies could be understood as a kind of anthropological dance (Ibid., p.28) that when applied to a South African context, might enable the participation of a wider cross-section of society, academic and cultural, in performance.

A review of the academic paths of a few lecturers at South African universities also highlighted several personal links between them. Firstly, I refer to Gary Gordon, long associated with Rhodes University's Drama Department, situated in the eastern part of the country. In the late 1980s early 1990s, he was trained in Laban techniques in South Africa by Fred Hagerman, a former lecturer at the University of the Witwatersrand, located in Johannesburg in the northern part of the country, before completing his Masters at the Laban Institute in London. In 1993, Gordon founded the First Physical Theatre Company at Rhodes University, which has been instrumental in spreading Laban's dance and

performance techniques through its physical theatre program. Over the years physical theatre has been sustained by Rhodes graduates in many other parts of South Africa. For example, the University of Stellenbosch, located down south in Cape Town, has Samantha Priegge, a former student and member of Gordon's company, as its Senior Lecturer in the Drama Department. Similar to Gordon, another South African scholar, Jill Waterman, was trained by Hagerman before studying at the Laban Institute in London in 1991. Waterman is now affiliated with the University of Witwatersrand, and focuses on contemporary dance and physical theatre in its Dramatic Arts division. Then, at UCT<sup>29</sup>, Jay Pather, a student at New York University in the 1980s, who would have been exposed to Schechner's various performance theories, included dance techniques such as contact improvisation and release-based contemporary dance, to strengthen a curriculum design in his institution. Pather's work is also associated with current lecturers in the University of Kwazulu Natal's Dance and Performance Studies programme, Loots and Craighead (both previously mentioned). Loots had danced in Gordon's ballets and taught with Pather at his Durban-based dance company, Siwela Sonke. In recent years, under the headship of Samuel (since 2008), the School of Dance<sup>30</sup> at the University of Cape Town has also demonstrated cross-overs<sup>31</sup> within academic disciplines Samuel was a

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<sup>29</sup> The current Performance Studies course at the University of Cape Town's Drama School, was designed by former Head of Department (2003-2012), Professor Mark Fleishman and an Associate Professor at the university, Chris Weare. In the capacity of ad hoc lecturer at the university under the current Head of Department, Geoffrey Hyland, I have based my movement classes on Butoh methodologies to support the acting skills of third-year drama students.

<sup>30</sup> Until 2004, the Dance department was run by Elizabeth Trieghaardt whose primary concern, it could be argued was ballet. However, she was also instrumental in spearheading Contemporary dance and African dance programs at the school. The contemporary division was established in 1987 and run by Sharon Friedman (who was part of the generation of the 60s that was more than likely influenced by international birth of Modern /Contemporary dance). Friedman also gave focus to Dance education and retired in 2011. She remains an influential dancer writer in the region and has recently edited *Post-Apartheid Dance: Many Bodies Many Voices Many Stories* (2012). In African dance, Maxwell Rani's current activities are concerned with giving the genre an academic and performance value that goes beyond the touristic gaze.

<sup>31</sup> In March 2011 the University of Cape Town's Medical Department celebrated their centenary in collaboration with the departments of music and dance. The show, *The Body Electric* was staged by Gerard Samuel and performed at the Baxter Theatre Centre, a theatre associated with the University of Cape Town.

professional dancer of classical ballet and also studied within the Drama and Performance Studies programme at the University of Natal (2002). He is linked to Loots at honours and masters level, danced in Gordon's ballets and was a guest teacher for Siwele Sonke. Much could be written about how interlinked relationships like these discussed above, have influenced and shaped the face of dance and performance methodologies in South Africa. For example, an eclectic band of individuals with practices ranging from drama (Jay Pather), Khoi-San rhythm-based choreography (Dawn Langdown), one of the first Black accredited teachers of African and contemporary dance at schools in South Africa (Busisiwe Ngebulana), as well as myself, have all been associated with the oldest contemporary dance company in the country, Jazzart Dance Theatre, and worked together in the early 1990s. Pertinent to this dissertation, I have noted how Samuel's Indian heritage and South African upbringing, as well as his political, socio-economic and educational history have been significant in his approach to Performance Studies. In turn, I am also influenced by him in his role as the supervisor of this dissertation. Samuel's current leadership is concerned with establishing ties between theories within the Humanities and Dance research. His worldview connects the Dance Department to Schechner who believed "the relationship between theorist and practitioner [to be] central [to] performance studies" (Harding & Rosenthal, 2011, p. 189). This understanding has been central to the methodologies employed and analysis of my research.

Having given a broad overview of the links between Dance and Performance Studies in Dance and Drama Departments at universities in South Africa, the discussion now shifts to how dancers have incorporated multi-disciplinary and intercultural elements in their work.

### Dancers and their Performances (South Africa and Japan)

Reading *Reworking the Ballet*, by American dance researcher, Vida Midgelow, was illuminating in its account of the positive and negative aspects that may be associated with intercultural performances. She cites examples of how classical ballets have been put into a contemporary context, and how butoh dancer, Iwana Masaki, interpreted the ballet *Giselle*. This could be likened to my own intention to investigate what I have distilled as, Butoh-Ballet. She describes Masaki's work to have significantly "embedded, and embodied within [it] complex forms of ... intercultural exchange" (Midgelow, 2007, p. 158). However, Midgelow also points out how "a reworking may seek to exceed the colonising source text, [but how] that source remains as an inevitable...essence" (Ibid., p. 171). In other words, ballet maintains its central positioning and the original work acts as a palimpsest throughout the contemporary rendition. Midgelow further referenced the Vietnamese post-colonial theorist, Trinh T. Minh-ha, who claims, "the third world representative the modern sophisticated public ideally seeks is [...] the *truly different*" (Midgelow, 2007, p. 166). With this I understand that performances that reinforce culture and race differences are appreciated more than those that explore notions of sameness, thus raising an issue whether ballet when performed by Black dancers expresses racial equality and destroys pervading prejudice or not. This thought is held by the Toronto-based critic, Deborah Root, who uses the term "cultural cannibalism [to theorise on how...] cultural differences are abstracted and aestheticised, [and negates] the people or the culture that is the source of the interest" (Midgelow, 2007, p. 166). These thoughts once again remind one to be mindful of the power imbalance and potential parasitic nature of intercultural acts.

Midgelow also states, "Given the cultural origins of ballet in Europe and the implicit 'whiteness' embodied in its history [...] it is not insignificant that non-white, non-Western dancers have turned their attentions to it" (Midgelow, 2007, p. 145). Within South Africa, however, dancers – in



which I include myself - have also turned away from ballet in order to bring attention to their Black or hybrid identities. In this regard, I refer to my dance piece created in 1995, entitled, *Daa! za Lady* (translated from colloquial Afrikaans to English as “That’s a Lady”). This work, described by South Africa’s leading dance journalist, Adrienne Sichel, as “emotional and highly personal, solo work” (Sichel, 2011), fused several dance styles and employed animate and inanimate metaphors to create a hybrid dance language. Over the years, *Daa! za Lady* has become a recurring motif in my performances and is closely related to my dance philosophies. Other South African dancers who continue to engage with their historical, sexual and racial identities in their choreographies include: Vincent Mantsoe, Boyzie Cekwana, Desiree Davids, Gregory Maqona, Mamela Nyamza and Nelisiwe Xaba. In addition, several written arguments for the presentation of Black dancers, by academics (Jay Pather, 2006, Steven van Wyk, 2011, Maxwell Rani, 2012, Craighead, 2006) have been ongoing.

At *Confluences 6*<sup>32</sup> held in 2011, van Wyk delivered the paper, *Ballet blanc to ballet black. Unpacking whiteness in South African ballet*, that corresponds to Midgelow’s critique of ballet re-workings. He refers to the “apartheid government’s [support of] ballet because it could use the traditional centrality of the white body [...] to exclude non-white bodies<sup>33</sup> [...] and reinforce] its white supremacist agenda” (van Wyk & Giesler, 2011, p. 333), and suggests how classical ballet has to shift from its central positioning. He claims that the solo performance of the classical ballet, *Swan Lake*, by a Black South African dancer, Dada Masilo, offered “possibilities of sustainability for ballet in South Africa” (Ibid., p. 336). At this juncture, the scholar, Stephen Morton’s rendering of the theories of Spivak, were helpful in understanding the political messages

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<sup>32</sup> *Confluences 6* occurred in 2011, the sixth conference since its inception in 1997.

<sup>33</sup> I notice how his avoidance of a binary opposite description by stating “non-white” as opposed to, for example, “Black”, still places White as the reference for race, thereby maintaining the central position that his paper claimed to critique.

entrapped in the body. In *Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak* he claims, “the structures underpinning aesthetic representation [...] also underpin political representation” (Morton, 2003, p. 57). Therefore Masilo’s Blackness inside the Whiteness of *Swan Lake* is undeniable. However, Spivak also further posited how a political representation does “not guarantee that the interests of [those systematically discriminated...] will be recognized [...] or heard” (ibid.). With this in mind, I wonder whether merely an oppositional racial arrangement of White dance is sufficient to “redefine [...] and re-invigorate ballet” (Steven van Wyk, 2011, p. 335)? Could it be that van Wyk and Giesler’s notion of postcolonial South African ballet choreographies as a deconstruction or “demystification of received hegemonies” (Steven van Wyk, 2011, p. 337) could also be perceived, in Middelton’s words, as a, “sublimation [...] into the colonizer’s agenda” (Middelton, 2007, p. 177) of exoticism? To my mind, this fuels a re-imagining of exoticism.

I find these questions interesting in the light of Schechner’s description of Performance Studies (which I believe bears relevance in Dance) as something that “other things should be brought into” (Harding & Rosenthal, 2011, p. 189). And borrowing from the French playwright, Antonin Artaud, I wonder if it is possible for these additional performance strategies to move beyond racial signification and express “a mystical meaning our theatre [or Dance] has forgotten” (Artaud, 1938, p. 35)? The answer may be found in *Women’s Intercultural Performance*, by Australian intercultural theorists, Julie Holledge and Joanne Tompkins, where Japanese butohist<sup>34</sup>, Murobushi Ko, is cited as describing butoh to be “beyond cultural fixations and social meaning” (Tompkins, 2000, p. 137).

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<sup>34</sup> Those who maintain the spirit of the original Butoh founders, Hijikata Tatsumi and Ohno Kazuo, are called butohists (Fraser, 2006).

Sichel argued that racist comparisons of the bodies of Black dancers to White dancers bodies, have lead to the neglect and infrequent representation of Black dancers on the South African Dance scene. In her conference paper, *Whose body is it anyway? Observations on the objectification and the exotification of the (South) African dancing body* (2011), she attributes the presence of relatively few Black female ballet and contemporary dancers to a Western aesthetic that prejudiced “the “wrong” feet, the “wrong” line, the “wrong” full-bodied silhouette, [and] the “wrong” colour [...of] Black bodies [...on stage]” (Sichel, 2011). Sichel uses a contemporary and ballet trained dancer, Nelisiwe Xaba, as an example to motivate her critique of prejudice. She describes Xaba as one whose “physical shape counted against her but [who] persevered on a scholarship at London’s Rambert School of Ballet and Contemporary Dance” (Sichel, 2011, p. 300). In response to “the question about not possessing the required hips, or silhouette, for a ballet dancer Xaba replied: “Nothing was right. I should have just stopped. It took me to want to do it on my own terms and not wait for a job”. (Ibid., p. 303). With respect to Sichel’s invaluable archival contribution to the South African dance scene, as well as the choreographic concepts and artistic commitment of Xaba, I would like to argue that references to skin colour and race as defining particular body shapes and artistic choices by many dance critics, company directors, ballet teachers as well as dancers themselves, perpetuate racist stereotypes. Notwithstanding the validity of blaming exclusion<sup>35</sup> from ballet on skin colour, I wonder whether preservationists of a Black body stereotype also consider what are the issues of unconscious gatekeeping<sup>36</sup> of a particular aesthetic<sup>37</sup> that are

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<sup>35</sup> In explanation, my thoughts revert to 1995, when I taught release-based contemporary dance classes at the Rambert Ballet School in London. Xaba was one of my students and I recall her shape as lithe, strong and not “full” (sic.), as Black bodies are often described. At the time, I was associated with a Black dancer and company member of Ballet Rambert, Sheren Wrey. I was not aware of overt racial discrimination at Ballet Rambert, and wonder if Xaba were to have auditioned for not the company at that time, might it not be possible that her skin colour may have been of no consequence had she met the technical requirements of that company?

<sup>36</sup> I include the entire community as being responsible for gatekeeping and refer to ballet critics and reviewers, company directors, ballet teachers, as well as parents who buy into the ‘ballet syndrome’ of attaining a particular image through diets and intensive training in a particular

inherent in their criticism? Revisiting Pather's previously mentioned counsel for African artists to be more self-conscious and critical, I wonder if there are indeed lateral ways to tackle pertinent Black and White issues in Dance that could potentially connect with people on a day-to-day level in South Africa's multi-cultural society? Could the intersection of butoh and ballet provide insight into ways of re-imagining the body in performance?

I believe and will show further in this dissertation, that butoh can stimulate the imagination of ballet dancers. For me, the spark of imagination is one necessary element in establishing relevance in performance. Before progressing to a discussion of butoh, however, the following readings relate specifically to the history and perception of ballet in South Africa.

### Ballet Literature

My search for literature on ballet as well as its history in South Africa and Europe, spanned books, journals, newspaper articles, performances, classes, online articles, photographic material and magazines published from the period from the 1930s to 2014. I also studied biographies of South African and European ballet dancers. My investigation of South African ballet was limited to the seminal work of Grut (1981). This remains the only historical record of the development of Ballet in South Africa that extends to the 1700s. However, as previously mentioned, Grut's account does not reflect the complex political dynamics of South Africa. I believe that the history of ballet in the country has yet to be written beyond Grut's book. I also found that South African ballet was often dismissed in historical accounts of ballet globally. For example, in

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way. This syndrome is further perpetuated in Hollywood films, such as *Center Stage* and *Black Swan*, which seem to valorise and relate psychological disorders, hardships and ultimate adulation to the world of Ballet.

<sup>37</sup> I am not countering arguments that challenge the Calvinist, White-supremist colonialist values of the ballet aesthetic and merely proposing an additional point of view.

*Ballet in Western Culture: A history of its origins and evolution* (2002), ballet teacher, Carol Lee excludes South Africa in its Commonwealth listing. I noted that in 2000, 2001 and 2002, which co-incides with the publishing date of Lee's book, Cape Town City Ballet, supported by a full orchestra, featured on the main stage of an international arts festival in South Africa, the Grahamstown Arts Festival. I find it curious that Lee's research missed the existence of Cape Town City Ballet, who according to Triegaardt (2012), has also produced many dancers associated with international companies like David Poole (Sadler's Wells Ballet) and Johaar Mosavel (Royal Ballet).

From Grut's book, I was able to deduce that in Cape Town, ballet could be traced to the Dutch colonials in the 1700s. The Eurocentric notions evident in the constructs of South African ballets and its related practices, have thus been entrenched for nearly four hundred years. This may explain why Triegaardt, stated in *Post-Apartheid Dance - Many Bodies Many Voices Many Stories* (2012), ballet "is alive and well in Cape Town" (Triegaardt, 2012, p. 17) and continuing to be popular. The formal establishment of Cape Town City Ballet can be traced to the efforts of South Africa's ballet pioneer, Dulcie Howes, in the 1930s. In *Dulcie Howes: Pioneer of Ballet in South Africa* (1996), former ballet dancer in South Africa, Richard Glasstone, gave an intimate account of her life and highlighted Howes's strategies to develop world class ballet dancers, as well as her intentions to make ballet available to all races in South Africa. This was significant as according to Glasstone, "apartheid was to play a role in the way ballet developed in this country". My research has shown that apartheid also affected the career development of White and non-White dancers in the country. To relate one example, both Grut and Glasstone refer to the prestigious career of South African ballet dancer, Johaar Mosaval, at the Royal Ballet in London. According to Glasstone, Mosaval was classified Coloured under the apartheid dispensation and thus, according to my knowledge, unable to excel in South African ballet institutions. Glasstone claimed that the company favoured lighter-skinned Coloureds who were able to pass for White

(Glasstone, 1996). On the other hand, prima ballerina, Dawn Weller, was able to hone her skills as firstly a dancer and subsequently, director of the Pretoria Arts Council (PACT) Ballet company in South Africa. Notwithstanding Weller's dedication and hard work, as pointed out in *Dawn Weller: Portrait of a Ballerina* (1984) by former PACT dancer, Jane Alleyn and photographer, Nan Melville, Weller's career excelled at a time when the South African government extended lucrative support to ballet in the country. The government therefore foregrounded a European aesthetic in a ballet system which, in spite of the race-inclusive efforts of Howes, succeeded in suppressing indigenous forms of cultural expression. In *They Make Tomorrow's Ballet* (1953), ballet writer, Frank Jackson comments, "The colour bar, even in those days of total war effort, hampered the development of talent, and made it difficult for the ballet to absorb, or even consider the many exciting forms of folk-dance (Jackson, 1953, p. 18). Indigenous themes in South African ballet were therefore few and far between.

In comparison to the developments of ballet in Britain, it could be seen that South Africa was lagging behind. In *A History of Ballet and its Makers* (1964), Joan Lawson discusses the endeavours of one of the pioneers of English Ballet, Dame Ninnette de Valois, who had danced with Diaghilev and went on to establish the Royal Ballet in London. Lawson describes Dame Ninette's classes<sup>38</sup> as "completely eliminating the turn-out so that the limbs worked in natural relationship to the body" (Lawson, 1964, p. 157). It is not the intention of this dissertation to show how developments in contemporary dance were in response to classical ballet techniques. However, I will point out that the techniques of Dame Ninette, that could be described as alternative, did not undermine the classical ballet repertoire of The Royal Ballet. To the contrary, and according to Lawson, "Such movements were designed to make

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<sup>38</sup> I believe it is important to note that Cape Town City Ballet only does classical ballet class and unless a guest choreographer, such as the South African contemporary dance choreographer, Adele Blank, is engaged, the dancers may do a contemporary dance class (Robin van Wyk, Interview, 19 August 2014).

students understand how to adapt their bodies to different choreographic designs" (Ibid.). These shifts in the training of classical ballet dancers in Britain date to the 1940s, around the time when South Africa's apartheid policies became officialised<sup>39</sup>. However, I do believe that the complex political situation in South Africa has instilled a different sensibility in local artists. Jackson used words such as "integrity, enthusiasm and artistic unselfishness" (Jackson, 1953, p. 19) to describe South African dancers. If these qualities are foundational to the spirit of ballet, I believe that the complex political currents in South Africa could be consciously addressed through the training and performance processes of ballet in the country.

Further reading pointed out the global intercultural connections in ballet in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. In *English Ballet* (1946), the British dance historian, W.J Turner, pointed out how the ballet scene in Europe was influenced by the Russians, which according to the French ballet dancer, Serge Lifar, in *Lifar on Classical* (1951), was influenced by the French and Italians. I note the impact that a Russian impresario, Serge Diaghilev, made on the arts scene as a whole. According to Turner, Diaghilev "had both real knowledge and an almost infallible instinct, and was accepted by all artists – whether painters, musicians, or dancers – as one of them" (Turner, 1946, p. 10). The literature showed that a ballet training methodology established in England, called Cecchetti ballet, was established by an Italian ballet master, Enrico Cecchetti, who was formerly associated with Diaghilev in Russia. The Cecchetti method was introduced to South Africa by Howes in 1928. Diaghilev also engaged a Russian composer, Igor Stravinsky, who composed the music for the ballet, *Le Sacre de Printemps* (Spring Rite) in 1913. I found Turner's description of the work interesting as he theorises that the ballet score was influenced by rituals associated with ancient times. He describes the ballet as "an attempt to recapture something of the mood

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<sup>39</sup> With the 1948 government elections in South Africa, the National Party gained control and officially instituted a system of racial segregation in South Africa.

and primitive character of [...] tribal celebrations of a sacred nature occurring before the dawn of history or art" (Ibid., p. 10). This lead me to a comparison of the Kealiinohomoku's essay, *Ballet as Ethnic Dance* (1970), where she defines "ethnic" as a group which places special emphasis on their cultural tradition (Kealiinohomoku, 1970). When one considers Turner's connecting Stravinsky's ballet composition to a tribal celebration, and Kealiinohomoku's ethnic association of ballet, as well as its trajectory in the West, I believe that one could see how it may have been the intention of ballet's makers to connect people. However, their ideas and notions are contained in Western literature that I believe, has perpetuated the hegemony of Eurocentric values through implicit and overt racist remarks. If one imagines that teachers of ballet refer to such texts for verification, one realises how insiduously notions of supremacy and inferiority could be sustained.

To explain, I will borrow from Spivak's theory (Morton, 2003) of how imperialists justify their subversive attitudes by rendering non-Europeans as 'Other' in order to exclude or negate their practices. I point to Grut's description of *The Square* (1963), choreographed by former Sadler's Wells dancer and artistic director of CAPAB Ballet, David Poole, and performed by a Coloured ballet company based in Cape Town, called the Eoan Group, who in my opinion, were 'othered' by Grut because they were not White. Grut claims that Poole "creates a style which suited the Coloured dancers, it gave them scope for their acting ability as well as successfully reproducing the feel and atmosphere of the Cape, where Coloureds have their home" (Grut, 1981, p. 20). I cannot vouch for the technical standard of the company as I was not there. However, it needs to be noted that Mosaval, mentioned above, performed in this ballet, which in my opinion, suggests that the work might have been of a high standard. I believe that the company was accomplished in dance, and not 'acting' which could give the impression of a lesser technique. I found support of my argument with Glasstone who described the Eoan Group "In the late fifties and early sixties [...at] the peak of its success in the field of ballet" (Glasstone, 1996, p. 103). Furthermore, during apartheid,



it was the reflex of many White South Africans to claim affiliation to Britain, believing that it absolved them of the crimes of the Afrikaans, (associated with the Dutch colonials) government (Adhikari, 2009). I believe that Grut may have been reflecting such an alliance as she separated herself from non-White or Coloured people with the words, “the Cape, where the Coloureds have their home”, especially because people classified as White, Black and Indian lived there too.

I have noted two further examples of how ballet writers have implied a superior standpoint in their literature. Firstly, *Ballet: Bias and Belief* (1983), by the American writer, Lincoln Kirstein described a dancer’s “fair appearance [as] (straight legs, small head, small hips, [and] facial features either interesting in themselves or capable of being made so)” (Kirstein, 1983, p. 396). In response I refer to the empowering notions of Mohanty, in *Under Western eyes: Feminist scholarship and colonial discourses* (1984) and wonder from whose perspective the dimensions of straightness and smallness are determined? And who decides when one’s facial features are interesting or not? As mentioned above, one cannot deny the existence of gatekeepers in ballet. However, I found Kirstein’s comments to be disparaging to ‘Others’ when one recalls how the Nazi German leader, Adolf Hitler, described the Jews, as well as how the proponents of slavery described Black people, as having, amongst other things, large heads and animal-like features. Secondly, I refer to, *Lifar On Classical Ballet* (1951), by the French ballet dancer, Serge Lifar, where to my mind, he comes across as a militant coloniser who forges ahead to conquer the next territory. With reference to the evolution of ballet he stated, “*Forward, forward to new shores!*” (Lifar, 1951, p. 31).

I believe that ballet in South Africa today, may require a similar activist spirit if it is to move with the political changes in South Africa. Triegaardt admits that the “subject matter of many of the classics is [...] so far removed from reality and current issues that they have become irrelevant and insignificant to the average audience member” (Triegaardt, 2012, p. 25). Therefore, I agree that ballet’s challenge is to “find contemporary

themes and concepts that will rejuvenate audience interest" (Ibid.). Given the fact that globalisation<sup>40</sup> allows one to access a variety of material in a relatively short period, I believe that one may need to carefully examine from which angle the re-animation of ballet in South Africa could come. Howes describes ballet as "the theatrical expression of human emotion" (Glasstone, 1996, p. 10). I find it curious that for Howes, the subject of ballet was emotional and not material. For me, this implies that work stimulated from feelings or thoughts, as with butoh, might be an interesting approach for connecting ballet to contemporary South Africa.

### Butoh Literature

Literature from both Western and Japanese perspectives state that butoh can have a social impact as well as provide ways of re-imagining the body. I was able to forward my thinking around the necessity and relevance of imagination in performance, with the theories of three scholars: Japanese dance historian, Kurihara Nanako, Japanese researcher of Kobe University, Shiba Mariko and American somatic therapist and dancer, Sondra Horton Fraleigh. I also note that a lot had been written on butoh in the 1980s and written by American authors, like Schechner (previously mentioned) (1986) and Bonnie Sue Stein (1986), as well as Fraleigh (1999, 2006). To me, including the perspectives of Japanese writers and performers has broadened my understanding and application of butoh.

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<sup>40</sup> I believe that globalisation illustrates an illusion of close proximity between people across the world. Internet web sites such as You Tube, as well as supermarkets and stores that sell items from abroad, accentuate this false impression of familiarity. However, it has to be acknowledged that notwithstanding South Africa, the insistence of English as the global language has excluded indigenous communities in large parts of South East Asia and South America from global ventures and relations spurred on by, what could be described as, the Euro-centric, Anglo-Saxon West. In addition, economic inequalities limit the access to computers and travel to very few, thereby limiting the number of those benefitting from globalisation. For example, in sub-Saharan Africa computer penetration amounts to less than 2 users per 1000 people. Chinn, M. D., & Fairlie, R. W. (2004). *The Determinants of the Global Digital Divide: A Cross-Country Analysis of Computer and Internet Penetration. NBER Working Paper Series No. 10686*. Cambridge: National Bureau of Economic Research.

A publication from the Hokkaido Institute of technology, entitled, *Perceptions in Butoh Dance*, by Toshiharu Kasai and Kate Parsons, published in 2003, notes, "Butoh dance, [...] invokes a perceptual pattern and tradition in which the perceiver is inextricably part of the world around him/her" (Kasai & Parsons, 2003, p. 4). I agree with their position that this all-round perception has "liberatory potential not just in terms of the individual mind-body, but on the level of the shared experiences of social groups" (Ibid., p. 7). In relation to Parsons courses in Women Studies, she explains how butoh,

may help women learn (or re-learn) to experience their own bodies in a manner distinct from the social. They may develop the ability not just to perceive themselves in terms of their appearance, but to perceive themselves through the use of their other senses (Kasai & Parsons, 2003, p. 7)

These ideas are echoed by Rachel Sweeney in her PhD thesis, *Transferring principles: The role of physical consciousness in Butoh and its application within contemporary performance praxis* (2009), when she describes butoh as an aesthetic that "[reflects] social, political and cultural debates which surround the body in performance" (Sweeney, 2009, p. 8). As opposed to ballet's concern with external expression, she holds that butoh "articulates an internal awareness" (Ibid., p. 3) and that its use of the senses aids "objectification and stratification of the body" (Ibid., p. 11). The meaning of the term, 'objectification', is expanded in the doctoral thesis of Frances Barbe, *The Difference Butoh Makes: A Practice-Based Exploration of Butoh in Contemporary Performance and Performer Training* (2011). She claims that objectification enables one to "take a new perspective [of distance] on the body, [and] explore it afresh" (Barbe, 2011, p.148). And as if in response to my aforementioned suggestion relating to the possible emotional and mental intersection of butoh and ballet, Barbe calls this process of distancing "an imaginative act" (Ibid.).

In the American journal, *TDR: The Drama Review*, Kurihara expands on how the founder of Butoh, Hijikata Tatsumi, understood and integrated the mind-body connection into his artform. She refers to the theories in

cognitive science of George Lakoff and Mark Johnson, in support of Hijikata's methodologies. They state, "the mind is inherently embodied, reason is shaped by the body, and since most thought is unconscious, the mind cannot be known simply by self-reflection" (Kurihara, 2000, p. 8). My experience with butoh has demonstrated how the relationship between psychological-physiological acts can develop an understanding of one's identity. Shiba claimed that Hijikata, and his process of searching for his identity, was part of Butoh's foundation. In the article, *Modern Dance in Japan* (2006) she states that "Hijikata endures a process of self examination in the production of Butoh dance" (Shiba, 2006, p. 124). I find her use of the word 'endures' interesting as it suggests a prolonged period of time or research process, as well as a sense of struggle and patience. For me, this is important to note as the answers to posed questions may or may not come easily.

Similar to Fraleigh, my thinking around Dance and Performance, specifically in relation to its "metaphysical and aesthetic" (Fraleigh, 1999, p.1) elements, shifted when I underwent a life transforming change in Japan. Fraleigh's *Hijikata Tatsumi and Ohno Kazuo* (2006) mentions a number of butoh masters that I had also learnt valuable performance methods from. Individuals referenced include Yamada Setsuko, in whose company, Biwakei, I performed, and who Fraleigh describes as one who has incorporated "the sheer lightness of ballet and the sculpting of modern dance in [her] Butoh" (Fraleigh & Nakamura, 2006, p. 17). She also mentions a dancer and butoh scholar with whom I have a friendly association, Kayo Mikami, whose techniques included "rhythmic gyrations of the torso that flail through the limbs" (Ibid., p. 16). Having experienced the classes of butohist, Nakajima Natsu, I can attest to the spiritual nature of her work (Ibid., p. 105-109). Fraleigh also describes the work of my foremost teacher and friend, Ohno Yoshito (son of co-founder, Ohno Kazuo, and hereafter referred to as Yoshito), as having "contributed to the founding and perpetuation of Butoh" (Ibid., p. 74).

Fraleigh and I also differ in our experience of butoh in Japan. She was directly influenced by Ohno Kazuo, and reveals her adulation of him in *Dancing into Darkness* (1999) when she confesses to “a sudden burst of hero worship” (Fraleigh, 1999, p. 158) when describing his performance. Admittedly, I also had an unforgettable experience at Ohno Kazuo’s ninety-ninth birthday celebration, when he clasped my hand whilst in his wheelchair, and danced. However, Yoshito’s first-hand teaching has shaped much of my thinking around butoh. Further, whereas Fraleigh’s writings seem to be focused on describing the discipline of Butoh and its makers, I am more concerned with integrating and extending its principles into my personal teaching and practice. My research therefore focuses on Fraleigh’s descriptions of butoh, as well as its historical development in relation to Contemporary dance.

Mary Wigman was one of the pioneers of German modern dance (Benson, 1986, Gitelman, 2003), and I found the literature that traced her connection to contemporary dance in Japan very enlightening. For historical background, my reading included articles, *Interrupted Continuities* (1986) and *Butoh: Twenty Years Ago We Were Crazy, Dirty and Mad* (1986), both published through *The Drama Review (TDR)*, of which the interculturalist previously mentioned, Schechner, is the editor. With my research subject situated in the field of Interculturalism, I was wary of appearing to be partial to Western theorists. Therefore, I also looked at recent writings of aforementioned Japanese scholars, *Modern Dance in Japan The Influence of the Western Culture and what Japan created on its Own* (2006) by Shiba, and *Hijikata Tatsumi: The Words of Butoh*, by Kurihara, as well as the personal reflections of Ohno Kazuo and Yoshito, in *kazuo ohno’s world: from without and within* (2004). I also found the perspective of Nicolas Bouvier, a Swiss travel writer who spent a considerable period in Japan, interesting. His book, *The Japanese Chronicles* (1992), whilst providing an escape from the academic approach, also created a sense of Japan from the 1200s until around the time of butoh’s creation in the 1960s.

In the last fifty years, butoh has spread across the world, however, it is only in recent years that performances thereof have reached South Africa. In 2010, the *First Physical Theatre Company* of Rhodes University performed a butoh work, *Amanogawa*, at the Grahamstown Arts Festival, South Africa. Based on this experience, Gordon's (mentioned above) article, *Shifting between Bodies and Words: Writing and performing the Butoh dance, Amanogawa* (2011), evoked a vast emotional landscape through photographs, poetic quotations, interviews with the choreographer and diary notes – all presented in different fonts and page patterns. I found his style of account to parallel the complex nature of butoh, in the sense that is impossible to define in conclusive, uni-lateral terms. In a Cape Town newspaper, *Tonight*, Sichel gives examples of “[Butoh’s infiltration in] South African contemporary dance and [notes] Sibikwa Arts Centre’s development of Afro-Butoh (based on Min Tanaka’s Body Weather form) with Boaz and Anika Barkan. [Also], Ankoku Butoh artist Frauke’s solo work, workshops and Ama-No-Gawa, her 2010 collaboration with Grahamstown’s First Physical Theatre Company” (Sichel, 2011) are mentioned. It may be interesting to note that these collaborations were not done by Japanese performers but like myself, individuals who have had a direct association with butoh makers in Japan. In this regard, I am often told that I am the first South African artist to have had such an experience. Vice Chancellor of the University of Cape Town, Dr. Max Price, has encouraged me to create a critical mass and begin to bring Japanese academics and performers associated to butoh to South Africa (Dr. Max Price, Interview, University of Cape Town School of Dance, 12 June, 2013).

The ideas of two Japanese performers, Saitoh Tetsu and Kudo Taketeru, have been helpful in answering my questions related to butoh danced with a ballet body. Saitoh, a composer, double bass player and occasional lecturer at Sophia University, Japan, regularly collaborates with butoh and contemporary dancers. These collaborations have included butoh dancer, Kudo, and myself. Both Saitoh and Kudo were closely associated with Hijikata’s wife, Motofuji Akiko (1928-2003) who

was a ballet dancer. Shared through private correspondence, their thoughts about Motofuji and butoh performance provided valuable insight to the nature and realization of creativity as well as the butoh body. Saitoh related his memories of Motofuji (see Appendix A) performing *The Raven* and described her pre-show ritual of crouching with a stuffed raven as an act that few contemporary dancers could emulate. With regard to dancing butoh, Kudo claimed that Motofuji described Hijikata's work to have grown from his whole life, and not merely an expression of style (Kudo Taketeru, Email correspondence, 13 May, 2013). Similar to Kudo, I have learnt how my lived experience cannot be separated from my artistic practice. This philosophy is expanded in the science of phenomenology. The review therefore continues to describe several readings in this invaluable field.

### Phenomenology

In recent years, theories in combining philosophy and dance have been advanced through the work of academics like Professor Susan Kozel, a philosopher whose wide profile includes dancing in the styles of butoh and ballet, as well as being a theorist of performing with digital technology. An electronic video clip reveals Kozel stating that the study of phenomenology has given "dancers permission to speak [...] and to describe the world as we experience it" (Kozel, 2009). My experience in butoh, combined with philosophies gleaned from readings in phenomenology, has revealed several potential overlaps in terms of their intrinsic notions, as well as in their connections to the overarching theme of Interculturalism presented in this dissertation. Consequently, I once again borrow from Bharucha who states, it is "the substratum of *life* that gives meaning to dance" (Bharucha, 1993, p. 58) and will refer to other intercultural theorists and practitioners like Midgelow and Barba, in subsequent paragraphs. Midgelow adds to this by referencing to the Japanese dancer previously mentioned, Iwana Masaki, who says, "the body [...] should be an alive and changing sculpture fashioned by life

itself [...] and the life is that which has encompassed individual history and experience” (Midgelow, 2007, p.156).

In addition, my understanding of phenomenology and its correlation to butoh, is largely based on the theories of the French philosopher, Maurice Merleau-Ponty (1908-1961). As such, I have examined *Sense and Non-Sense* (1964), *The Visible and the Invisible* (1968) and *Themes from the Lectures at the Collège de France 1952-1960* (1970). Around the same time that Merleau-Ponty expounded his philosophies, scholars Nathaniel Lawrence and Daniel O'Connor edited *Readings in Existential Phenomenology* (1967), which included several analytical essays of the field. In recent years, *The Cambridge Companion* (2005) included writings such as *Seeing things in Merleau-Ponty* (2005), by Sean Dorrance Kelly, as well as *Motives, Reasons and Causes* (2005), by Mark Wrathall, that comment on this complex philosophy. However, I found the theories of American Professor of Philosophy, Robert Sokolowski, in *Introduction to Phenomenology* (2000), most helpful in explaining “the major philosophical doctrines [...] in a clear [fashion]” (Sokolowski, 2000, p. i). To maintain a wide perspective on the subject, I have also read the American pragmatist philosopher, Richard Shusterman’s, criticisms of Merleau-Ponty in *The Silent, Limping Body of Philosophy* (2005) and his suggestions of areas of potential development within the field.

As many of my ideas around performance are linked to phenomenology, I found it helpful to interrogate my opinions against the critiques of both Sokolowski and Schusterman. In response to these criticisms, I will firstly refer to Schusterman, and his claim that Merleau-Ponty’s theories have overlooked a somatic application. He states,

Lacking in Merleau-Ponty’s superb advocacy of the body’s philosophical importance is a robust sense of the real body as a site for practical disciplines of conscious reflection that aim at reconstructing somatic perception and performance to achieve more rewarding experience and action. (Shusterman, 2005, p. 177)



In contrast to the metaphysical stance of Merleau-Ponty and his contemporaries, Schusterman goes on to recommend the more pragmatic philosophies of William James and John Dewey, as a means to ameliorate somatic consciousness (Ibid., p. 153). It may be interesting to note how butoh might meet his requirements when one considers Fraleigh's description of Ohno. In *Dancing Into Darkness* (1999), she likens him to "a somatic therapist...[that] teaches a conscious awareness through movement" (Fraleigh, 1999, p. 63, 64). Another criticism against phenomenology was made by Sokolowski himself. He claims, "One of the great deficiencies of the [...] movement is its total lack of any political philosophy" (Sokolowski, 2000, p. 226). In response, I understand political philosophy to be concerned with how the intrinsic nature of men and women in society relates to various issues, including governance, religion and economy. In terms of this dissertation, my insistence on finding points of meeting between a few distinctive characteristics of ballet and butoh and its potential application to performance and the South African society at large, could be perceived as a political act. Further, in recall of Loots and other feminist writings (Katrak (2006, Craighead (2006)) the links between the "dancing [and...] political body (Loots, 2013, p. 34) are inevitable.

Sokolowski pointed out another gap in phenomenological understanding that relates to consciousness and expression. He states, "there may be a slight touch of the ultimately secret in our awareness [...] that] would deserve exploration to show what sort of identities and differences, presences and absences, and unities in manifold are possible within it" (Sokolowski, 2000, p. 155). I see the unconscious germane to the 'secret in our awareness' and in this regard the power of butoh suggested by Fraleigh. In reference to Hijikata, Fraleigh writes,

In our body history, something is hiding in our subconscious, collected in our unconscious body, which will appear in each detail of our expression [...] We can find Buto, in the same way we can touch our hidden reality, something can be born and appear, living and dying in the moment. (Fraleigh & Nakamura, 2006, p. 50).

Several sources, including scholarly journals (Kurihara, 2000) books (Fraleigh, 2006) and first-hand conversations I was privileged to have whilst in several workshops (between 2003 and 2011) in Japan with Yoshito himself, suggest that butoh is an epistemological study into phenomenology's "core doctrine of intentionality" (Sokolowski, 2000, p. 11). According to philosophy, intentionality directs consciousness outwards, yet simultaneously identifies it to an interior self. In other words, butoh finds a psychological connection to the body and the universe (Ibid.). Butoh has much to add in this regard too. Succinctly put, this view of intentionality finds root in humanity. For example, first generation butoh dancer, Nakajima Natsu says, "I am striving...not towards art, but towards love"<sup>41</sup>. (Fraleigh, 1999, p. 53). I hold that this intention in performance could fill the somatic and political gaps that Schusterman and Sokolowski claim are evident in the philosophy. Further, I believe that these aspects deserve to be examined so that one "can reclaim a public sense of thinking, reasoning, and perception [and...] reassume our human condition as agents of truth" (Sokolowski, 2000, p. 12).

Merleau-Ponty refers to humanity in his claim that "Philosophy is [...] concerned [...] with the human conversation" (Merleau-Ponty, 1964, p. 156). I believe that assimilating phenomenology with the internal awareness that Butoh cultivates, might enable South Africans to shift away from the limitations of external representations such as race or gender. With Dance academically situated in Humanities, I understand how phenomenology and contemporary dance are laterally linked in making a social contribution. More specifically, I refer to South Africa's history of racial discrimination and violence, and point to Sokolowski's claim that a phenomenological approach has the possibility to move one

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<sup>41</sup> In my opinion, love is as multi-faceted as art and also requires imagination and creativity. My consideration of love as a hybrid emotion continues to inspire my performance work. In one piece, called *Love Is*, I explored embodying the description of love as expounded in chapter thirteen of the Bible scripture, 1 Corinthians. job, j. (2012, November 14). *Love Is*. Retrieved September 07, 2013 from You Tube: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=abaT15rPUY>

beyond “the categorical formations we inherit”<sup>42</sup> (Sokolowski, 2000, p.167). Understanding that divisions between people are often based on external factors, I agree with and can see the value of phenomenology’s introspective approach. In this regard, Merleau-Ponty stated that the practice of its philosophies could reveal one’s “inner framework” (Merleau-Ponty, 1968, p. 220). This sense of self-observation, I believe, is one point of intersection between *butoh*, a branch of contemporary dance, and phenomenology.

Further readings of Sokolowski showed additional aspects of phenomenology that articulated my understanding of *butoh*. For example, in referring to cultivating a self-investigative and authentic practice, Sokolowski acknowledged the importance of things that may be perceived as indeterminate, as well as understanding the necessity of ongoing research. With regard to the indeterminate, he states, “We have to start with vagueness when we enter into a new domain of thinking” (Sokolowski, 2000, p. 107). I see this to support my current research process, especially as it is a fairly new area in the domain of Dance. In addition, I have found Sokolowski’s statement, “Even when we think we know a lot about something [and thus perhaps take it for granted], we may be missing something central” (Sokolowski, 2000, p. 166), appropriate in explaining one kind of thinking that may be observed amongst dancers who see themselves as technically proficient. To explain, one could make a parallel with ballet dancers who might easily become satisfied with technical prowess from a one-dimensional perspective, and fail to investigate, as Sokoloski claims, “the [underlying] truth of things” (Ibid., p. 166). This search for truth is an ongoing research process, in which as Sokolowski asserted, the sense of taking things for granted is inevitable, yet positive, as it “makes it necessary for us always to remember again the things we already know” (Ibid., p.185). He explains, in the search for truth there needs to be a digging into

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<sup>42</sup> I include sex, economic, social, cultural, political and racial distinctions as inherited formations.

“cultural things that we directly encounter [and an unpacking of] them down to their elementary categories [...in order] to “unbuild” them” (Ibid. p. 167). In terms of my research subject, I have interpreted ballet as the “cultural thing” that Sokolowski mentions, and suggest butoh as a tool to help deconstruct it down to its basic intention. According to Russian ballet dancer, Anna Pavlova, the motivation of ballet “is to bring something from within ourselves and thus make our stage personalities alive and vital” (Magriel, 1947, p. 61).

In addition, Sokolowski refers to an examination of “errors and vagueness” (Ibid., p. 185) and a contemplation of the darkness (Ibid., p. 168) in the search for authenticity. For me, these relate to elements of vagueness and darkness evident in butoh principles. According to Ohno Kazuo, “Under us lies a lateral space.” [Meaning] that dance must awaken us to what lies *beneath* the surface of our everyday lives” (Ohno & Ohno, 2004, p. 46). Again, these words of Ohno echo Merleau-Ponty’s explanation of the location of truth. He wrote, “the essence [which I interpret as truth...] is an inner framework, [...] not above the sensible world, [but] beneath” (Merleau-Ponty, 1968, p. 220).

Sokolowski’s theories are also helpful in associating the abstract and inward looking principles of phenomenology and butoh to performance. He explained phenomenology as “a domain about which it is very difficult to speak, because it requires a transformation of the vocabulary that is geared first and foremost to worldly objects” (Sokolowski, 2000, p. 132) and added that this adjustment in language was best expressed with the use of “metaphor and other tropes” (Ibid., 145). These symbolic tools of representation are employed in the performance of both ballet and butoh. For example, it can be seen within the magic realism of ballet, princesses, fairies and witches tell stories of love (*Giselle*), transformation (*Swan Lake*) and sadness (*La Sylphides*). Within butoh, “a flower is often [used to show] the ideal mode of existence” (Ohno & Ohno, 2004, p. 89), or morphing into a wall or stone could demonstrate a lifeless state. I hold that the ability for ballet and butoh dancers to show

many “identities and differences, presences and absences” (Sokolowski, 2000, p. 155) is more heightened in the performance processes and staging of butoh. With this in mind, butoh principles could potentially be utilised to flavour the magic realism of ballet with more surrealist notions. I believe that in order to overcome our historically and culturally embedded hurdles, one needs to follow Bharucha’s advice and “open ourselves up to other, like-minded, yet distinct frames, [which I see in phenomenology], in whose overlapping spheres we can find those blurred spaces [potentially magical realism and surrealism] that bring us together” (Bharucha, 2000, p. 43). In conclusion, my belief in Butoh-Ballet is articulated in the words of the multi-genre Spanish artist, Pablo Picasso, “Everything you can imagine is real” (Düchting, 2013, back cover). For me, imagination is crucial to developing a sustainable relationship between butoh and ballet.

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## **CHAPTER THREE**

### **HISTORICAL OVERVIEW OF BUTOH AND BALLET**

#### **Butoh: Past to Present**

The overall intent of this chapter is to describe and give a historical overview of Butoh, a Contemporary Dance form created in Japan in the 1950s by Hijikata Tatsumi (1928 – 1986) and Ohno Kazuo (1906 – 2010). Due to structural limitations, an extensive history of contemporary dance itself and traces of its trajectories and influences across the globe, as I have done in previous writings (Job, 2013), will not be possible here. To begin, the historical overview is restricted to a discussion on Contemporary Dance in Europe at the beginning of the twentieth century, and will show how it acted as a catalyst for the emergence of butoh in Japan. I refer to the arguments of scholars, Kasai and Parsons (2003), against notions of the one pioneer in German *Ausdruckstanz* (*Expressionist dance*), Mary Wigman, being the key influence to the development of butoh in Japan and agree that such viewpoints are reductionist. In so doing, this discussion will show how Japanese dance teachers and former students of Wigman, Takata Masao and Ishii Bashu, were significant in the development of contemporary dance in Japan in the early 1900s (Shiba, 2006). The differences of approach between Wigman's techniques and butoh are also examined and thereafter, this chapter will explain how butoh developed in its own right as an indigenous form of Japanese dance (Kurihara, 2000). As opposed to only looking at Western writers for affirmation, this discussion pays attention to the texts of Japanese writers of butoh, and includes their perspectives of Hijikata and Ohno. This body of writing will show how the development of butoh's concepts and its subsequent developments were influenced by a combination of social, political and economic factors.

In drawing the parameters of this section, there are several more factors that may or may not have contributed to butoh's development in Japan, and specific dates and incidences where no direct or indirect relevance was noted will not be unpacked. For example, I am aware of how, since the beginning of the 1900s several Western choreographers, which include Martha Graham and George Balanchine, as well as theatre makers, which include Edward Gordon Craig and Peter Brook, had been using Asian elements in their works (Stein, 1986). Their efforts created a sensibility in Western audiences toward Japanese performance techniques, like Noh, Kabuki and since Ohno's first performance at the Nancy Festival, Canada, in 1980, also towards Butoh. The West's attention was also drawn to Japan in 1964 when the Summer Olympics were held in Tokyo. In addition, I have noted how the West began to pay considerable attention to Japan during the 1980s and 1990s, a time in which several academic texts were written about butoh (Stein, 1986, Schechner, 1991, Fraleigh, 1999). This was the time when the country was soaring financially, dominating the global electronic industry and investing huge amounts in foreign capital (Wood, 1992). Moreover, I realise how the support and acknowledgement from the West may have served Butoh's development in the twentieth century and resulted in it becoming a valid approach to transforming dance and drama on new grounds (Fraleigh, 1999). These issues, however, are reserved for future writing. This section is focused more on the phenomenon of butoh and its inherent qualities, which I believe, include embodiment and metamorphosis. Here, the discussion shows how an application of butoh has developed my performance style and borrows from the notions of Butler and Artaud to articulate its application to South Africa in terms of gender and identity issues. A few parallels between Japan, butoh and South Africa are also put forward to consider relevance to South African society today.

It may be interesting to note that butoh, originally called *Ankoku Butoh* (translated as: Dance of Utter Darkness)<sup>43</sup> has retained a non-conformist culture and still exists in relatively small avante-garde-seeking<sup>44</sup> performance circles today. Cited examples of Butoh practitioners that are spread around the world include Kudo (previously mentioned) in Japan, Iwana (previously mentioned), Gabrielle-Marie Rotie and Frauke<sup>45</sup> in Europe, as well as myself, currently in South Africa. The section therefore ends with a description of butoh's spread and current influence on the rest of the world.

### German Contemporary Dance and the Japanese

There were four individuals: an American feminist choreographer, Isadora Duncan, two German teachers, Emile Jaques-Dalcroze and Rudolf Laban, and a German dancer, Mary Wigman, who at the beginning of the 1900s, pioneered schools of thought in Germany that propagated different perceptions of the dancing body and in turn, challenged the then dominant dance form, Classical Ballet. In 1904, Duncan confronted the status quo in her liberatory solo performances where she danced barefoot in a free-flowing dress<sup>46</sup> and consequently opened the way for a more self-expressive dance qualities (Lamothe, 2006). The following phase in the Contemporary dance scene occurred in Germany and was largely developed by Dalcroze who aimed to develop movement concepts to music, now known as Eurythmics, and

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<sup>43</sup> The book, *Kazuo Ohno's World: From Without and Within* mentioned that this term stemmed from Haniya Yuko's description of a Hijikata dance compared to "an obscure image moving about in the womb. Ohno, K. O. (2004:143). *Kazuo Ohno's world from without and within*. (J. Barret, Trans.) Canada: Wesleyan University Press.

<sup>44</sup> I have coined this term to express a particular mindset of audiences and artists that are looking for something unconventional and indeterminate in dance performance.

<sup>45</sup> In her capacity as a butoh dancer, Frauke is known by one name only and excludes her last name in references.

<sup>46</sup> At the time, women only performed solo roles within the bigger spectacle of a classical ballet production, wherein they wore *pointe* shoes and corsets, and portrayed binary sexist roles as either ethereal beauties or whores.



opened an institute of physical education and art in Hellerau, Germany (Manning & Benson, 1986). This subsequently became the place where avante-garde and popular culture intersected. At the same time, Laban, who became noted for his educational methodologies based on space, time and free movement, opened a school in Munich, Germany. Around this time Wigman began her training with Dalcroze and later with Laban, with whom she became a close collaborator during World War 1. After the war, however, Wigman became famous for her embodiment of “the spirit of expressionism [...] that transcended the individual” (Manning & Benson, 1986, p.34).

Several dance academics (Fraleigh, 1999, Shiba, 2006) refer to the general notion of Wigman being the key influence to the development of *butoh* in Japan. I will argue that Wigman’s techniques influenced the thinking of Japanese dancers around self-expressive dance but did not define the qualities intrinsic to *butoh*. One reason for pointing to Wigman is that the founders of *butoh*, Hijikata Tatsumi and Ohno Kazuo, both trained with Eguchi Takaya, a contemporary dance teacher who became an important figure in the Japanese dance landscape. Similar to his dance teachers in Japan, Takata Masao and Ishii Bashu, Eguchi also travelled to Europe, during which time he studied with Wigman for two years. He returned to Japan in 1933 and similar to Wigman, “taught fundamentals in movement and creation” (Shiba, 2006, p. 121) as opposed to carefully composing the individual steps of a dance. Mariko claims that when Eguchi returned to Japan in 1933, he did not “find it worthwhile to imitate...Western dance [and that he had] long wanted to do what the Westerners [could] never do [...and went on to produce...] many [...] pupils that have become leaders [in] Japan’s dancing circle” (Shiba, 2006, p. 122). I hold that Eguchi intended to create something of and for the Japanese, and believe this to be evident in Hijikata and Ohno’s work. I argue that Eguchi’s philosophy enabled them to transcend their modern dance training and develop their individual styles that eventually differentiated them from Modern dance.

Links are often made to the conceptual and expressionist qualities evident in both Wigman's technique and in butoh. For example Fraleigh states, "I find this conceptual approach [of butoh] similar to my studies with Mary Wigman in Germany [...and] German expressionism" (Fraleigh, 1999, p. 235). However, Kasai and Parsons pointed out several debates around this connection. One of these relates to the meaning of the term 'express' – "that something is pushed outward, and in some cases that what is internal is forced toward the external" (Kasai & Parsons, 2003, p. 258). In this regard, Fraleigh, also spoke about how the methodologies of Wigman and Ohno differed in their intentions. She explains that in Wigman's class, the improvised exercises had an extrovert intention, whereas in Ohno's class, "one turned an inner eye to the movement and oneself" (Fraleigh, 1999, p. 38). According to Fraleigh "[a] delicate attunement to the remembered and subtle body is a major difference between Butoh and German expressionism" (Ibid). Adding to the complexity, is the way the Japanese conceive the self. As opposed to the Western emphasis on individual identity rather than group identity, Japanese conceptions of the self are more diffused and permeable. I have learnt that butoh and the Japanese culture have many contrasting characteristics that defy simple definition. Several opposing elements make it difficult to describe one's exploration of butoh as complete. For example, Fraleigh describes butoh as "imagistic, often meditative, and sometimes wild" (Fraleigh, 2010, p. 51). She adds, it "sees beauty in weakness and disorder, [and is] "metamorphic, [existing in both] light [and] dark [planes]" (ibid, p. 54).

Ironically, at the time when the Japanese public began to embrace *Ausdruckstanz* (Dance of Expression), it was nearing the end of its reign in Germany. This may be due to Wigman's and Laban's association with the 3<sup>rd</sup> Reich (Manning & Benson, 1986). According to Susan Manning and Melissa Benson's article in *The Drama Review*, their alliance "drained ausdruckstanz of artistic vigor" (Manning & Benson, 1986, p. 44) and thus concluded their dominance in the German Contemporary Dance world. With Hitler's rise to power in 1933 (the year Eguchi

returned to Japan), combined with other political tensions across Europe, many dancers who maintained anti-war sentiments went into exile. This exodus was largely to America and resulted in the creation of a cultural assortment of talented dancers and choreographers in New York City. After World War Two (WWII), the highly personalized style of these dancers in America was named Modern Dance.

However, it should not be forgotten that Modern dance “distilled its choreographic essences from sources around the world” (Fraleigh, 2010, p. 41). This was seen in the use of Native American rituals by American choreographers, Ruth St. Denis (*Incense*, 1906) and Martha Graham (*Primitive Mysteries*, 1931), as well as African sources by Katherine Dunham (*L’Ag’Ya*, 1938) and Alvin Ailey (1960). Considering that Modern dance also “borrowed extensively from Japanese aesthetics” (Ibid.), Fraleigh notes that “perhaps Butoh borrowed back what modern dance had already borrowed from Japan” (Ibid.). She asserts that “Butoh recreates the ethnic eclecticism of modern dance in its utilisation of global sources” (Ibid., p. 42). One could therefore make the connection between the physicality of butoh and Hijikata’s and Ohno’s background in dance and sports. Fraleigh, called Hijikata the originator of “*Ankoku Butoh* [...] with a gestation period] in the early post-war era and finally coming to attention during the global upheavals and political riots of the 1960s” (Fraleigh & Nakamura, 2006, p. 7). This dance is what eventually came to be globally known as butoh.

### The Emergence of Butoh in Japan

Previous writings of butoh have often attributed its rise to to America’s atomic bomb attack on Hiroshima and Nagasaki (Fraleigh & Nakamura, 2006), Zen Buddhism (Fraleigh, 1999) or other Asian elements, like traditional Japanese martial arts (Stein, 1986). I agree with Kurihara’s claim that, “the origin of [...] Butoh is far more complex” (Kurihara, 2000, p. 17). Therefore, I will attempt to move away from a reductionist explanation by considering how a combination of factors could be

considered in postulating the cause of its emergence. The worldviews and sensibilities of Hijikata and Ohno were also influenced by the socio-political, cultural and economic landscapes prior to and following WWII. I believe they were two charismatic individuals who made a profound contribution to Dance in a particular physical, emotional and spiritual space and time. In terms of dance, their conceptual insights may have initially been a response to *Ausdruckstanz*, but it soon became a form that became distinct from the most radical experimentalists in the Western world and changed the way dancers perceived performance.

In 1967, Hijikata and Ohno stopped working together and went their separate ways. From thenceforth, Hijikata “choreographically, [went] in search, within the body itself, of gestures and memories buried under the veneer of everyday life” (Ohno & Ohno, 2004, p. 141), and created work on one of his students, Yoshikawa Yoko. Ohno also underwent a “self-searching phase” (Ibid., 144) and made films with the experimental filmmaker, Nagano Chiaki. In 1977, he re-emerged with his seminal work, *Admiring La Argentina*, in Japan, leading to his first overseas performance in Canada in 1980. Unfortunately, Hijikata died in 1986, in the midst of butoh’s success. Still, butohists, Yoshito (Ohno, 2004), Murobushi Ko (Stein, 1986) and Tanaka Min (Marshall, 2006) all agree that Hijikata informed butoh with a particular aesthetic. According to Shiba’s writings, “Butoh dance [was] made famous by Hijikata” (Shiba, 2006, p. 123). Yoshito claims that Hijikata sparked off a radical change in his father’s approach to dance (Ohno & Ohno, 2004, p.134) and Min agreed by stating that “Mr Ohno was influenced by Hijikata (Stein, 1986, p. 145). However, Yoshito also mentions that his father’s work was more marked by Hijikata in the period of their working together, but this changed after they parted ways (Ohno & Ohno, 2004, p. 137). In the following paragraphs I will briefly recount their individual contexts and worldviews, and show how they made distinctive contributions to butoh.

### About Ohno Kazuo

Ohno Kazuo, the elder of Hijikata by 22 years, began to study with Eguchi in Tokyo in 1936. In 1938 he was called up for military service and spent the following nine years in Western China and New Guinea. According to Yoshito, these war years were to have a marked effect on the psyche and consequent butoh technique of his father (Ibid. p. 113). In the classes I attended in Japan, Ohno often referred to how the death and devasatation that his father saw during WW11, as well as his one year-long imprisonment<sup>47</sup> in New Guinea, had influenced his dance. Moreover, Ohno also felt that his father's conversion to Christianity<sup>48</sup> prior to his war years played a role in his notion of butoh. He did not "[worship] in the conventional sense...for him, dance [sprang] from his faith in God and his belief in the healing capacity of art" (Ibid., p. 157). It might be that the combination of his experiencing the horrors of war, as well as his Christianity, enabled him to have "an indepth grasp on the causes of madness" (Ibid., p. 117) and embody suffering. Ohno's lessons also encouraged a transformative spirit, that enabled the "experience [of] "... a blossoming in yourself [by becoming animate or inanimate things like] a flower" (Fraleigh & Nakamura, 2006, p. 67) or a stone. Another sign of his spirituality could be seen in the "recurring themes of life, death, and rebirth" (Ibid., p. 25) employed in his dances. However, prior to the butoh development in his dance career - sparked by the meeting of Hijikata in 1954 - Ohno resumed his dance classes and continued as a substitute teacher at Eguchi's studio when he returned from the war in 1946. He also performed in recitals staged by

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<sup>47</sup> There may be some discrepancy with Sondra Fraleigh's claim that his imprisonment lasted two years. (Fraleigh, S., & Nakamura, T., 2006). However, my claim references the chronology of Ohno Kazuo as outlined in *kazuo ohno's world: from without and within* (2004). I have deliberately chosen this time reference as it reflects the thoughts of Ohno Kazuo's son, Yoshito, and his manager Mizuhata Toshio.

<sup>48</sup> Compared to Ohno, I find it ironic how my fundamentalist Christian upbringing often limited the depth of introspection in my work, and that my understanding of the largely non Christian values and non Western sense of spirituality of the Japanese society, to have deepened my performance processes.

Ando Mitsuko, a disciple of, Eguchi's teacher, Ishii Bashu. It was at one of these recitals, in 1954, that Ohno and Hijikata were first introduced to each other.

### About Hijikata Tatsumi

Hijikata arrived in Tokyo in 1952 and according to Kurihara, "experienced great shock" (Kurihara, 2000, p. 17) at the state of affairs. Even though he had left the extreme poverty<sup>49</sup> of his hometown, Akita, and Tokyo was not wealthy at this point, Kurihara explained that he still felt a huge divide between himself and his contemporaries. Coming from the Tohoku region in the north of Japan, his rural roots were easily picked out. It might not have helped that at this time, "the Tohoku dialect was often the butt of jokes on TV" (Ibid., p. 18). On the other hand, he shared a similar sentiment to the populace who were lamenting irrevocable changes in their society due to the American Occupation (1945 – 1952). On the one hand the Americans, influenced by a degree of guilt after their atomic bomb attacks on Hiroshima and Nagasaki in 1945 as well as the spate of B-52 attacks on Tokyo between 1942 - 1945, "fueled the economy...and rejuvenated the industry" (Bouvier, 2008, p. 84). At that point, the Japanese experienced several seeming contradictions. Tokyo was "destroyed [...] physically [but] liberated [...] artistically" (Kurihara, 2000, p. 18). At the same time, many Japanese were suspicious of the American Occupation and their imposed political transformations. For example, they were compelled to revoke imperial rule and heed to democracy (Kurihara, 2000).

The Americanisation and the post-war rebuilding of Japan was not without paradox. During the 1960s industrialisation happened on a tremendous scale that resulted in "extreme pollution [...] disease [...] the destruction of] landscapes [...] communities [as well as] traditional social

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<sup>49</sup> The people of the Tohoku region experienced many famines and in desperation, Hijikata's sister was sold into prostitution.

relations” (Kurihara, 2000, p. 21). Writing at that time, Bouvier mentions that the Japanese yearned for “old culture” (Bouvier, 2008, p. 84). Kurihara talks about a “pervasive sense of loss permeating Japanese society [which then] gave rise to the desire to recapture [...] qualities of premodern Japan” (Kurihara, 2000, p. 21). During this period Hijikata constantly reflected on the landscape, people and his childhood in the Tohoku region. His work radically embodied a sense of nostalgia that fed into the populist culture of “nativism” (Ibid.). Kurihara adds that Hijikata was a voracious reader of Artaud, as well as of French poets, Arthur Rimbaud and Comte de Lautreaumont, both who had major influences on Surrealism. According to Bouvier, at this time ideal values seemed to be ensconced in anything French. He vividly talks about how each month, journalists would swarm the deck of the French steamboat, and lay claim to any thing they could find. However, Hijikata felt a large connection to the contradictory world created by the novelist, Jean Genet. He immersed himself in Western novelists and poets whose ideas resonated with Genet. When one reflects on how alienated he might have felt in modern Tokyo, far away from his Tohoku rural nature, it may become apparent how Genet, who was also rejected by society<sup>50</sup> may have had an impact on his imagination. Genet described “poverty [as] a virtue; [and] lice [as] emblems of prosperity” (Ibid., p, 18) and drawing from his writings, Hijikata was able to produce original work that constantly challenged and inverted concepts of life, death, sexuality, beauty and ugliness (Ibid.).

It was under these circumstances that Hijikata and Ohno worked together. Through several performances in the 1960s it became evident that Hijikata and Ohno were not mainstream modern dancers. Their difference in the Contemporary Dance world was sparked by Hijikata’s first butoh work in 1959, *Kinjiki*<sup>51</sup> (Forbidden Colours), that utilised a live

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<sup>50</sup> Genet was a vagabond and petty criminal before he became a writer.

<sup>51</sup> The title of this work was borrowed from the Japanese novelist, Mishima Yukio (1925 – 1970), who became a great admirer and introduced Hijikata to other avante-garde artists and

chicken and sexually explicit sounds to express the theme of homosexuality. It was performed by Hijikata and the teenaged Yoshito, and resulted in their severing ties with the conservative Contemporary Dance Association of the time (All Japan Art Dance Association). I also understand Hijikata's uniqueness to have arisen due to his constant self-reflexivity. He even went as far changing his birth name, Yoneyama Kunio, to his stage name, Hijikata Tatsumi, in order to force people to regard him differently. Kurihara points out how "his own strong presence [emerged due to his] focusing on the body and his experiences" (Kurihara, 2000, p. 19).

As mentioned earlier, Yoshito claimed Hijikata was responsible for changing his father's approach to dance. As opposed to using modern dance techniques to "[portray] life as seen and felt by the living" (Ohno & Ohno, 2004, p. 134), their collaboration resulted in Ohno Kazuo's increasing "[reflection] over the meaning of death" (Ibid.). They each held distinctive worldviews and Fraleigh describes them as, "aesthetic associates [representing] two opposites of a yin/yang magnetic polarity [...] Hijikata [celebrated] the negative in his themes of death and sacrifice, in ugly beauty, and in mud, [whilst] Ohno [spiraled] downward, [...] with a fluid spirituality" (Fraleigh & Nakamura, 2006, p. 24).

According to Yoshito, their opposition was evident in their 'deep-seated principles [...] Hijikata [was] the freethinker, and Kazuo, [was] the believer in God" (Ohno & Ohno, 2004, p. 137). Curiously, Hijikata's last words on his deathbed were, "In my last moments, God's light..." (Ibid.). For me, this seeming contradiction in values once again highlights the difficulty experienced when attempting to describe *butoh* in finite terms. Considering this, which elements should be present in order for dance to be determined as *butoh*?

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prolific writers, such as Shibusawa Tatsuhiko (1928 – 1987), who translated a work of Marquis de Sade.



As established above, the definition of butoh is complicated by ambiguities and seeming contradictions. According to Fraleigh, "Butoh, even more than other dance, befuddles the rational mind, not communicating denotative discrete meaning; rather it survives on images that continually change, riding the moment of meaning in transition" (Fraleigh & Nakamura, 2006, p. 3, 4). I maintain that a butoh performer could be defined as one who is able to transform and metamorphose themselves and the environment, through sustained and restrained acts of embodiment and the art of suggestion, as opposed to straightforward statements in dance. To explain further, I have found it useful to appropriate the thoughts of Artaud and Butler, when discussing characteristics of the butoh body and mind.

Artaud calls for the "reworking of the human body...in other words, a self-made body...which [would] liberate [people, making the ability] to 'dance inside out' [possible]" (Scheer, 2004, p. 6). In my previous writings I mentioned how this liberated body could be achieved with nudity and the body painted in white (Job, 2013). In butoh terminology, the white make-up "erases all superficial expression" (Ohno & Ohno, 2004, p. 65), neutralises the body and obliterates the self. It therefore "helps us to transform our sense of body" (Ibid.). In performance, the stripping away of garments exposes a body that has no connotation to preconceptions or externally influenced notions of image presentation. As such, the performance may be rendered more truthful. Other elements often intrinsic to butoh, is a physically challenging slow speed of movement, and the quality of restraint. However, a butoh dancer cannot only be defined by a stereotypically white painted, nude, slow-moving body. I find it interesting that a similar description could be used

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<sup>52</sup> Yoshito Ohno claimed that to convey love was the primary intention behind all of his father's work. With that in mind, the title, "Butoh Is..." borrows from the "Love Is..." cartoons created by New Zealand artist, Kim Grove, in the late 1960s.

to describe an isiXhosa male around 20 years of age undergoing initiation rituals in the South African *veld* (Afrikaans for “*field*”). It has been my experience that for everything one defines as *butoh*, an equally true statement could be made in opposite terms. An extract from aforementioned Sweeney, helps to clarify,

Butoh training can be seen as the gradual forming of a question in the body. This question does not seek answers as found in the articulate aesthetic forms of ballet or other shape-shifting movement languages, but rather the long term process of Butoh training serves only to expand and deepen the length of that question. (Sweeney, 2009, p. 53)

My writing in the South African Dance Journal (job, 2013), quoted a Japanese writer, Sakurai Keisuke, who eloquently captured the philosophy of *butoh* by making a comparison between Isadora Duncan and a *butoh* dancer. He says,

If...Duncan danced ‘leaves on a tree’ she would have tried to capture it in the movement of leaves blown by the wind. But *Butoh* dancers’ aim is to become the leaf itself. So in *Butoh*, even when trying to express a spiritual or invisible thing, it has to be shown by the presence of the body, not by the action or motion. (Benjamin, 2002, p. 28)

For me, this corporeal presence becomes evident in the a convergence of mind-body activities, that could be understood in the term, ‘embodiment’. Butler mentions such acts in ‘drag’, ‘butch’, ‘femme’, ‘transgender’ and ‘transsexual’ persons (Butler, 2004). She claimed that “new modes of reality [could] become instituted [...and] in becoming otherwise [we could see how] realities to which we thought we were confined are not written in stone” (Ibid., p. 29). I believe that by inserting a different genre, like *butoh* to ballet processes, performers and indeed performing could become someone or something else and over time, create a new epistemology in Dance Studies. To me, *Butoh-Ballet* could emerge as a bona fide choreographic practice. My reference to Butler is not only due to the fact that many Japanese *butoh* performers often project a physically androgynous quality. I would like to point out that similar to Butler’s enigmatic characters, *butoh* dancers are able to become ‘other’ through embodiment. More than that, the dancer undergoes a process of metamorphosis, and by the audience’s experience of the dance, they in turn transform. Fraleigh recounts,

“Hijikata dances his darkness, constructs his body of pain and absurdity, and the audience morphs through these aspects of themselves. As for Ohno, people feel better in his presence and through the spirituality of his performances” (Fraleigh & Nakamura, 2006, p. 72). I believe that a particular presence of body and mind enables one to metaphysically transform and establish connections with one’s environment. At one of my solo performances in 2013, a South African poet, Malika Ndlovu, felt moved to compose a poem whilst I was performing. The following excerpts give an indication of the imagery evoked through the dance,

*Through her skin  
Vulnerable resonant bones [...]  
Spiritual attendance  
As sound maneuvers  
Mood and mental frames  
Melt into patient receptivity  
Beyond what eye hears  
Heart sees [...]  
Resurrection of imagination  
A purple ribbon in the wind  
A wisp of the purest notes*

### Butoh Parallels

It is my opinion that the geography of Japan as an island nation philosophically parallels with the political isolation in South Africa from the 1960s to the 1990s. In other words, Japan is an island that is distanced and separated from the West by ocean as well as culture. Between the 1960s to 1990s, South Africa was like an island due to the cultural boycott (see footnote<sup>7</sup>) experienced in the country. During this time, artists were cut off from activities abroad and worked in relative isolation. I believe this has added to similar complexes of inferiority for artists in

South Africa and Japan. On the other hand, the cultural ostracisation and its consequent isolation, did give South African based artists the opportunity of creating work from their imagination. Works of this nature became increasingly evident from the mid 1990's and could be seen in the work of visual artists like Willie Bester, writers like, James Matthews, theatre directors like Taliep Peterson and David Kramer, as well as myself. As an artist I have insisted on representing work in a hybrid fashion by inserting elements of political and historical reference in my choreographies, as well as creating my dance language on real and imagined memories and self-constructed fiction. Hijikata and Ohno, too, created butoh concepts by applying their imagination and constructed an original danceform that "[choreographically], went in search, within the body itself, of gestures and memories buried under the veneer of everyday life" (Ohno & Ohno, 2004, p. 141). Similar to the South African artists mentioned above, their concepts were successfully developed on home soil, and reinforced a specific identity or ideology in performances abroad.

Another parallel could be considered in a Japanese phenomenon that the American Butoh writer, Bonnnie Sue Stein, talked about, "*gyaku-yunyu* or "go out and come back" [that implies the necessity of gaining] recognition abroad [in order to] win approval in Japan" (Stein, 1986, p. 114). In a similar fashion, I believe that African artists have historically also followed the trend of choosing to be measured by standards set by the Western global north. The former director of the IZIKO South African National Gallery, Marilyn Martin, commented on an embedded prejudice in the art world that has been internalised by many in South Africa, and describes how "work from the West is seen as innovative, and from Africa, as "derivative" (Marilyn Martin, Telephonic conversation, Cape Town, 4 April, 2013). I agree with South African scholar, Annie Coombes, who has written much about South Africa's post apartheid nation, that "the inequality of access to economic and political power [...] in relation to the Western metropolitan centres" (Barker, Hulme, & Iversen, 1994, p. 111), plays a key role in maintaining the power in the

West. This imbalance has perpetuated the need for artists to leave the country in search for validation, and hopefully gain approval from their nationality.

Stein adds how the success of the Japanese abroad<sup>53</sup> was aided by dance and theatre makers, such as George Balanchine and Peter Brook, as well as businesses, such as Bloomingdales, who captured the Western public attention by labelling their imports from the East as “exotic” (Stein, 1986, p. 112). It is not my intention to delve into a discussion about the cannabilistic nature of exoticism that Midgelow points out (Midgelow, 2007, p. 166). Suffice it to say that like the Japanese abroad, African artists continue to fall into the trap of representing an ‘exoticism’ which ironically, often enables them to sustain a living with performances on European and American festival circuits, and thus the notion of achieving success.

In butoh, several exercises are focused on engaging memory as a vehicle for performance. At the age of seventy-one years, Ohno’s solo, *Admiring La Argentina* (1977), was inspired by his memory of a performance he had seen in his early twenties. He claimed to access deep memories and “trace [his] life back to its most distant origins...[and] return to where [he had] come from” (Ohno & Ohno, 2004, p. 76) in several performances. Butohist, Tanaka Min mentioned how Hijikata “was always angry about how our bodies are controlled historically” (Stein, 1986, p. 146) and tried to find different ways of moving. Yoshito also speaks about how his father danced to “discover a “new world” in the process” (Ohno & Ohno, 2004, p. 9), and that his ultimate purpose was to nurture and comfort our souls. I believe that remembering the past, striving towards a new world and healing, bears relevance on South African society. In my hometown, Cape Town, during the 1990s,

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<sup>53</sup> Unlike Ohno, Hijikata chose to not perform overseas. Sadly, he died soon after he had planned to make his first trip.

the *Truth and Reconciliation Commission*<sup>54</sup>, staged many court-like sessions that encouraged South African citizens to remember cruel injustices of their past. This was believed to be crucial in beginning the healing process of people who had suffered injustices during South Africa's apartheid regime. Further, the South African sociologist, Zimitri Erasmus, argues for the simultaneous need to find new ways of re-imagining our identities and creating a different "cultural form" (Erasmus, 2001, p.24). Considering South Africa's multi-cultural society today, as well as its turbulent political past, we would need to find creative ways to confront our differences, if we are to move beyond the imposed negative racial stigmas of the Apartheid dispensation.

In terms of performance, Hijikata "believed in allowing movement to emerge from the body itself" (Ohno & Ohno, 2004, p. 12). Perhaps this could explain why some dancers are able to insert an individual style in their performances. Yoshito often speaks about how he portrayed the stillness of a picture frame when dancing with his father who reflected the flow of the image (Ohno, Workshops, Tokyo, 2003, 2005, 2007, 2010, 2011). As already mentioned, the dance styles of Hijikata and Ohno also varied substantially, yet remained connected in its spirit. Philosophically, South Africans could benefit from investigating individual ways of contributing to our hybrid culture. As a politically engaged artist, I propose the processes of butoh as a means of reworking and transforming the reality of the body and mind, and potentially forge a collaborative spirit in the nation.

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<sup>54</sup> This commission was inaugurated in 1995, after South Africa's first Black president, the late Nelson Mandela (1918 – 2013) came into power in 1994. It remained active until 2002 and gave people who had suffered various indignities, atrocities, and injustices during the previous apartheid regime, the chance to tell their stories and face their aggressors. One of the aims of the commission was to recall the past in order to not repeat it the same crimes against humanity again.

## Butoh Dances and Dancers

All around the world, more than sixty years since Hijikata and Ohno's collaboration, several artists continue to investigate and develop their own butoh. As Fraleigh says, "Butoh may be the most intercultural postmodern art we have" (Fraleigh, 1999, p. 8). By way of example, I would like to point to the work of four artists: Japanese dancers, Iwana and Kudo, based in France and Japan respectively, British dancer, Rotie in England and Swedish dancer, Frauke based in Sweden. Although these artists often describe their dance in terms akin with generalist butoh philosophies, my aim here is not to present an analysed description of their work. By citing these four examples, I merely wish to indicate how butoh has extended beyond Japan, proliferated into the rest of the world, and maintained its ambiguity.

Midgelow referred to the work of Masaki extensively in her book, *Reworking the Ballet* (2007) where she described how he interpreted the classical ballet, *Giselle*, through butoh. Iwana seems to have the ability to transform into human, animal and spirit and focuses on becoming "a dancing entity that has given up on becoming human as a material entity" (Midgelow, 2007, p. 181). He currently lives in France where he teaches *Butoh blanc* (white Butoh), attempting to extend Hijikata's *ankoku Butoh* (dance of darkness), to "expose the darkness of [one's] own existence [to such an extent] that it comes under the "white sun," meaning a perfectly clear and cloudless light" (Ibid., p. 155). In contrast to Iwana's personal approach, Kudo, acclaimed for his work in the 1990s with the Japanese butoh dance troupe based in France *Sankaijuku*,<sup>55</sup> as well as his ongoing solo performances across the globe, claims to constantly be searching for the balance between his life as an artist and the art of butoh. As opposed to seeing performance as the complete unveiling of the self, he relates to a principle expounded in *bunraku*

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<sup>55</sup> *Sankaijuku* is a Japanese Butoh company co-founded and lead by Amagatsu Ushio. They are based in Paris and are recognized as one of the most popular companies abroad.

(Japanese puppet theatre) called “*kyojitsu-himaku no aida*”, meaning that it has to be performed between the false and the true (Kudo Taketeru, Email communication, March 8, 2013). As such, he believes, “theatre work should be a collective and a service to others. Then a soloist must have a paradox inevitably in oneself” (Ibid., December 12, 2012). The sophistication of his philosophy as a soloist becomes even more complex when one ponders on his claim that the essence of man has not evolved and hence, his goal is “to search for the original human condition...Then we can finally build up a proper way for believing in ‘God’” (Grunebaum, 2009). At the same time, he feels that “Butoh is a dying art form [yet he feels no regret as] the Japanese have a sense of extinction that connects to [embedded] principles of Buddhism” (Ibid., May 21, 2013). When one considers the spread of butoh in the world, I would have to disagree with Kudo that it is a dying form. I note, in 2012, we were commissioned to perform a new work, *San-Nin Tango*, at a German cultural festival, Across the Borders, in Aachen (see Appendix B). In addition, through regular newsletters, I am aware of the weekly classes of Rotie, in London. Rotie regularly invites performers and choreographers to offer classes and in November, 2013, Japanese dance/theatre artist based in France, Wakamatsu Moeno, taught workshops entitled, *Sculpting Time*, focused on concepts like awareness of self, time and space, as well as the erasure of self. In South Africa, *First Physical Theatre* worked with Frauke, and produced a piece called, *Amanogawa* in 2010. In describing his experience of the process, company director, Gary Gordon (aforementioned), appropriates the words of American interdisciplinary dance researcher, Judith Hamera, to articulate a sense of melancholy and claims butoh “performers wear technique...like the clothes of loved ones who have passed on” (Gordon, 2010, p. 26). Gordon expresses the impact of the work at the beginning of his article by saying, “This dance will not leave me” (Ibid., p. 18). Indeed, it has continued to live in his words penned in the South African Theatre Journal in 2010. In my personal performance capacity, as seen in Ndlovu’s poem above, butoh also receives a visceral response which may be ascribed to non-Western and non-essentialist aesthetics.



I agree with Fraleigh that “[dance] forms [...] must change and evolve in new contexts [in order to survive]” (Fraleigh & Nakamura, 2006, p. 100). In terms of Dance on a global scale, I believe that South Africa is potentially an environment where butoh could be developed and informed by different circumstances. I find it interesting that Japan, Britain, Sweden and South Africa, countries with distinct geographic distances between them, as well as social, economic, political and cultural differences, find confluence in the abstract notions of butoh. For me, this indicates that butoh is not dying, but finding new avenues of life in countries across the globe.

This section has discussed how Hijikata and Ohno created butoh in personal creative response to a range of cultural, social, political and social factors. In addition, considering the descriptions of various Butoh performers, including my own experience, I am persuaded to believe that the tools for healing and transformation are held within butoh. I believe that butoh has the potential to influence a new order of things in society. Butler alludes to this when she says,

As a consequence of being in the mode of becoming, and in always living with the constitutive possibility of becoming otherwise, the body is that which can occupy in norm in myriad ways, exceed the norm, rewire the norm, and expose realities to which we thought we were confined as open to transformation. (Butler, 2004, p. 217)

This leads me to wonder whether the ballet body that has been, what I believe, confined to Eurocentric ideas, is open to rewire itself and transform?

### Ballet: Historical Overview in South Africa

The parameters of this chapter do not allow for an indepth historical account of ballet in South Africa and the many contributing factors to its transitions and developments. It is not my intention to comment about the shifts in socio-political climates in South Africa, and a detailed account of the activities of ballet masters in different parts of the world

will not be given. This dissertation will not be getting into the ballet education system or the relations to ballet within Dance in South Africa. Neither will the stories of iconic ballets like *Swan Lake* or *Giselle* be described. This section will not champion the impact ballet has made on the worldwide Dance scene, however, it does acknowledge the length of tradition and influence ballet has made across the world, including South Africa. The intent of this section of writing is deliberately pointed at giving the reader a sense of what I see as five factors relating to ballet in South Africa. Firstly, I will give a brief account of the spread of ballet in Europe. Secondly, I will describe the factors leading to its introduction to South Africa and especially to Cape Town. Thirdly, I will look at how apartheid has contributed to the larger South African public's perception of ballet as a form of White dance. I will also discuss how ideas around indigenous performance have always been part of Cape Town City ballet's ideologies, but largely remain unrealised. Finally, this chapter suggests a new meaning of indigenous performance in South Africa, one that requires an organic process of dancers re-imagining themselves in order to persuade audiences to look forward to how ballet can communicate in new and different ways.

#### To Cape Town via Paris, St. Petersburg, London

Ballet's intercultural trajectory has been honed over centuries and can be traced from France in the seventeenth century, to Russia in the nineteenth, then back to Europe and across the rest of the world including South Africa in the twentieth century (Kirstein, 1983, Nadel & Strauss, 2003). Ballet developed most where royalty existed and in 1661, the French King, Louis XIV [...] founded a Royal Academy of Dancing in Paris (Turner, 1946, p. 18). With royal household funds, "he set the stage for the preeminence of the Paris Opera" (Nadel & Strauss, 2003, p. 101) instituted the professionalisation of dancers and designed the proscenium stage. Ballet history lecturer in America and inventor of an American Ballet pointe shoe, Eliza Minden, claimed that nobility in Russia also "looked to the West as a window on culture and civilization"

(Minden, 2005, p. 126). This was evident with the Russian ballet master, Marius Petipa (1818 – 1910), who had danced as a soloist in the Paris Opera before returning to St. Petersburg, Russia in 1847. In his lifetime he created several ballets like *Swan Lake*, *The Sleeping Beauty*, and *The Nutcracker*, which are still in the repertoire of most ballet companies around the globe today. Various Italian teachers, like Enricco Cecchetti, and ballerinas, like Virginia Zucchi, were invited to Russia over this period, resulting in the “Russian technique [to be fused with] Italian and French styles” (Lifar, 1951, p. 32). After Petipa's death, another Russian, Serge Diaghilev, became an impresario and key player in the ballet world. He engaged composers such as Igor Stravinsky and Maurice Ravel, painters such as Pablo Picasso and Henri Matisse, and choreographers like Marie Rambert and Enricco Cecchetti, in his creations. In addition, he also had much to do with establishing the importance of music and set design in the composition of ballet choreographies. Cecchetti was also the teacher of Anna Pavlova, who at the beginning of the twentieth century, inspired a whole new generation of ballet dancers across the world, including a young South African named, Dulcie Howes (Lynham, 1947, Kirstein, 1983, Grut, 1981).

With these achievements in mind, it seems clear why the ballet historian, W.J Turner, states that English ballet began with the Russians (Turner, 1946, p. 9). According to historians, Myron Nadal and Marc Strauss, Rambert and Cecchetti were instrumental in providing “skills needed to encourage ballet to take root” (Nadel & Strauss, 2003, p. 108) in Britain. My research shows how the influence of Cecchetti's techniques spread to South Africa, and is still notable in the methodologies employed by several teachers today. In addition, it points out how South Africa's dual Dutch and British colonial heritage had an impact on ballet in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. I am aware, that prior to that both the Dutch and British settlers were keen to maintain their cultural affiliation with their motherland and promoted Eurocentric supremacist ideas through styled balls and parties in large homes to entertain the garrison. This

imposed and promoted their cultural values and negated and dismissed indigenous cultural expression as barbaric.

In Europe, Holland had been exposed to French ballets during the time of the Batavian Republic (1795 – 1806) which according to Grut<sup>56</sup>, resulted in the “inclusion of ballet in an evening of theatrical entertainment” (Grut, 198, p. 8) during the time of the Dutch Occupation in South Africa. Despite this fact, the Dutch may initially have shown a less favourable response to ballet, compared to the British. Grut makes reference to an 1826 Dutch article in the *Nederduitsch Zuid-Afrikaasch Tydschrift* that attacked ballet as inappropriate for men, women and children, particularly as it gave rise to licentiousness (Grut, 1981, p. 10). This did not stop ballet activities in the country and the British went on to invite the first teachers of the twentieth century to South Africa. Relationships between the Dutch and British settlers in South Africa have always been contentious. However, they found compromise and similar identities in their separatist values that promoted the hierarchy of European people who were showered with resources in education, culture and economics, and deliberately oppressed indigenous people. By the 1900s the Dutch settlers were largely represented by an Afrikaans-speaking (a language derived from Dutch) agricultural community, called Boers, who declared war and demanded the withdrawal of British troops. They came to an agreement in 1910 when South Africa was officially recognized as a union. However, the country still conformed to British values by agreeing to be part of the Commonwealth that until today is still headed by Queen Elizabeth II. In dress, religion, language, literature (English), and in the performance arts (ballet, drama, music), the link to a British cultural system was thus perpetuated and promoted above other cultures both European in origin and indigenous culture. One of the benefits of these efforts of the British was the promotion of ballet that took root and was evident in “Cape Town

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<sup>56</sup> Marina Grut was the Ballet History lecturer at the University of Cape Town’s School of Dance until 1977.

[being] the cradle of ballet in South Africa” (Ibid., p. 2), that has allowed ballet to sustain itself more than in other South African cities like Durban or Johannesburg. Triegaardt, mentions that the company has “at times [been] the only extant professional ballet company and one of the oldest in the world” (Triegaardt, 2012, p. 17). Ballet thus explodes from the Mothercity, Cape Town, across the country for the larger part of the 1900s.

### 101 Years of Ballet: 1912 – 2013

In 1912, two individuals, a ballet teacher, Helen Webb, and musician, William Bell, arrived in Cape Town (Grut, 1981). Although unbeknown to each other at the time of their arrival, a series of activities and mutual attachments lead to their becoming inextricably linked to the development and institutional status of ballet in Cape Town. Prior to Webb’s arrival in South Africa, she was a pupil of Robert Morris Crompton, the first founding member and first President of the Imperial<sup>57</sup> Society of Dance Teachers, in London. Following his methods, Webb taught “small daughters [...] to curtsy prettily and to improve their grace and carriage” (Grut, 1981, p. 20) at her school in South Africa. In 1920 she visited London and observed Cecchetti’s classes whose methods subsequently enriched her teaching. This was especially evident in one of her students, Helen B. White, who had studied in London with Cecchetti and his pupil, Margaret Craske (who had danced with Diaghilev mentioned earlier). White also completed the Imperial Society’s examinations with Craske and became an important teacher at Webb’s school. One of her students, Dulcie Howes, was later to establish the first ballet company in the whole of South Africa in 1934 (Grut, 1981, Glasstone, 1996, Samuel, 2009).

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<sup>57</sup> The hierarchical status implicit in the term “imperial” does not go unnoticed.

The start of Howes' ballet company stemmed from Webb's connection to Bell, as well as the impression of Pavlova's visit to Cape Town in 1925 (Glasstone, 1996). Bell became the first Professor at Cape Town's College of Music in 1920, and later, in 1923, the Dean of the University of Cape Town's Faculty of Music. He regularly staged concerts at the landmark Little Theatre in Cape Town, and was initially assisted by Webb and her dancers, and in later years, by her student, Dulcie Howes. After seeing Pavlova perform in 1925 Howes claims, "a vision and a goal was firmly fixed in my mind – and I realized that, somehow, I must make it possible to achieve this goal" (Glasstone, 1996, p. 16). Like her teacher, Howes travelled to London to study with Craske who later invited her to become a founding member of the Cecchetti Society in South Africa. Around the early 1930s Howes had a group of her own students in a small studio in Rondebosch, a suburb in Cape Town, and confessed to Bell her dream of creating a ballet school that had artistic and academic merit. This led to her moving her studio into a room at the College of Music in 1932 and eventually, in 1934, the University Ballet School became one of the first ballet departments in the world to be part of a university program. This school created several talented dancers and choreographers like John Cranko<sup>58</sup>, Frank Staff<sup>59</sup>, David Poole<sup>60</sup> and Johaar Mosavel<sup>61</sup> who went on to establish their careers with the Sadlers Wells and Royal Ballet companies abroad, before returning to South Africa to impart their skills. Later, when Howes established a ballet company, the school acted as a feeder of talent for her company. However, in discussing ballet's development in South Africa, as already mentioned, the racist agenda enforced by the South

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<sup>58</sup> Cranko joined UCT Ballet in the 1940s and went on to become the founder and artistic director of the Stuttgart Ballet. He played a vital role in its rise to fame in the 1960s.

<sup>59</sup> Staff joined UCT Ballet in the 1950s and choreographed several works for the company that still remain in the current repertoire of Cape Town City Ballet.

<sup>60</sup> Poole joined CAPAB Ballet in the 1960s and became its artistic director in 1970.

<sup>61</sup> Mosavel trained at the UCT Ballet School in the 1940s. He left South Africa in the 1950s and had a successful career abroad, dancing as a soloist with the Royal Ballet. He resettled in South Africa in the 1970s.

African apartheid government cannot be ignored. As a consequence, in South Africa, both the University of Cape Town as well as ballet was perceived as a reflection of White people's culture. For many and to this day, this perception still holds true. Further, for those who were classified as 'non-White' and wanted to be seen as White to gain social advantage or mobility, much remains to be written.

According to Glasstone (1996), Howes tried to surpass the racist laws by incorporating Coloured<sup>62</sup> dancers into the company, as well as performing in theatres, such as the City Hall and Little Theatre, where the colour bar restrictions were not applied. From my research of hordes of photographs, I believe that in spite of the efforts of Howes, a racist agenda remained implicit as the integration of non-Whites seemed limited to Coloureds and ignored possibly darker-skinned individuals who might have been labeled as Black or Indian. As Glasstone admits, "a sort of "hierarchy of pigmentation" [existed and] the lighter-skinned "coloureds" tended to fare better than those of a darker hue" (Ibid., p. 101). For example, Poole was a lighter-skinned Coloured, whereas Mosavel was not, and therefore could be seen to "blend" (sic) in much better with the ballet company. Therefore, even though both were dancing with the Sadler Well's Company's first tour to South Africa in 1954, "Poole could perform at the "whites only" Alhambra Theatre, but Mosaval was too dark-skinned to pass for white" (Ibid., p. 104). In 1970, Poole even went on to become the director<sup>63</sup> of CAPAB<sup>64</sup> Ballet, the

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<sup>62</sup> Alfred Rodrigues joined the company in 1937 and created his first ballet in 1938.

<sup>63</sup> With the exception of the directorship of David Poole (1970 – 1990), and Robin van Wyk (2008 – present) Cape Town City Ballet has had a history of women at its helm. Dulcie Howes was the artistic director (1934 – 1970) and Veronica Paepers held the same title (1990 – 2006). Professor Elizabeth Triegaardt was the executive chairperson (1997 – 2004) and currently serves as the honorary executive director.

<sup>64</sup> In 1963 the South African government established arts councils to promote Eurocentric Dance, Drama, Opera and Music in four different regions of South Africa. The council of each city had a bureaucratic acronym: In Cape Town, CAPAB (Cape Performing Arts Board), in Transvaal, PACT (Performing Arts Council of the Transvaal), in Durban, NAPAC (Natal Performing Arts Council) and in Bloemfontein, PACOFS (Performing Arts Council of the Orange Free State).

name given to the University Ballet School in 1963 when it progressed to a company that was subsidised by the South African state. However, in 1954 Poole mentions his desire to “work with his own people [...] and] to found a school of indigenous South African dancing [...] that [would] give [...] dancers a chance to dance as South Africans” (Ibid.). Poole’s thoughts might be seen as an echo of Howes’s all-South African ballet, *Vlei Legend* (Marsh Legend), choreographed in 1952, as part of a festival celebration of the third centenary of the Dutch arrival in the Cape. Considering the all-White nature of this event, I believe that Howes’s choice of concept, based on a story written by South African author, Uys Krige, about a Khoi-san (name of a group of people indigenous to the Cape) princess, could be seen as non-conventional and experimental.

In an interview given to a South African newspaper, *The Star*, in 1986, Howes claimed that in order for ballet to remain alive in the performing arts, choreographies should be reflecting the challenges of South Africans. One year prior to this statement, in 1985, Coloured and Black students across the country were involved in political uprisings against the state that often had violent consequences, and lasted for nearly six months. With this in mind, I believe that Howes may have had discriminatory education and race issues in mind when she referred to the “stresses and strains” (Ibid., p. 68) of South Africans. During the course of her career, Howes seemed to remain aware of the importance of creating works relevant to South Africans, and this view could also be recognised in the work<sup>65</sup> of subsequent artistic directors and choreographers of the ballet company in Cape Town.

Curiously, it seems to me that Poole may occasionally have succumbed to a narrow racist worldview. In 1968, when the South African dance critic, Eve Borland, questioned him about the creation of indigenous

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<sup>65</sup> Examples of works include *The Rain Queen* (1973) by David Poole, *Herrie-Hulle* (1973) by Veronica Paeper, *The African Firebird* (2003) by South African choreographer, Christopher Kindo and *African Landscapes* by South African choreographer, Sean Bovim.



work, Poole points at “the classics [as] the yardstick by which the best companies are judged” (Grut, 1981, p. 223) and claims that the company was not ready to provide indigenous works. Considering that the company dancers were technically accomplished and able to hold their own on international platforms (Glasstone, 1996, Grut, 1981), one might imagine their having the capacity to use their technique in portraying a variation of styles. Why did Poole think they were not ready? Moreover, with rehearsal periods inevitably linked to the creative process, why did he feel they were unprepared for indigenous works? Did they lack technical skills to dance indigenous dances? I believe that Poole’s resistance to the term ‘indigenous’ is a complex socio-psychological issue born from conscious and/or unconscious acceptance of racist values deeply entrenched in South African society. For example, in South Africa, one might readily perceive the subservient jobs or inferior status of Black people, such as domestic workers or drunkards, and the relative authoritative positions of White people, as normal. In spite of Cape Town City Ballet’s claims of “[giving opportunities] to talent, irrespective of race or colour” (Triegaardt, 2012, p. 19), I have noted how these racist ideas were perhaps unconsciously assimilated into the ballet. For example, in *Coppélia* (2013), a Coloured male dancer, positioned centre-stage, portrayed a drunk whilst the “others” (sic), Whites, looked on and shook their heads. It might be worthwhile to look into how ballet producers are in denial or fail to interrogate race issues when Black and Brown bodies are on stage. Samuel, who is a South African of Indian origin, stated how, after auditioning for several ballet companies in Europe in the 1980s, he was often labelled as “too exotic” for their cultural framework (Gerard Samuel, Interview, Cape Town, 15 March, 2014).

During the course of her career, Howes seemed to remain aware of the importance of creating works relevant to South Africans, and this view

could also be recognised in the work<sup>66</sup> of subsequent artistic directors and choreographers of the ballet company in Cape Town. Poole's South-African themed ballets, *Pink Lemonade* (1959) and *The Square* (1963), was created on the aforementioned Eoan Group and featured Mosaval. *Le Cirque* (1972) "was a dramatic comment on social pressures and repression [...and] his ballet *Kami* (1976) made a rudimentary stab at portraying the Malay influence on dance in the Western Cape" (Ibid., 21). His successor, Veronica Paeper, whom he hoped would "one day ensure that a South African voice [be] heard in the World of Ballet" (Beukes, 1984), had choreographies such as *Cleopatra – an African Queen* (1999) that could be seen as an Africanisation of the classic portrayal. She also wrote *Drie Diere* (Three Animals) (1980) that was based on the writing of South African poet, N.P van Wyk Louw, and danced to music of South African composer, Peter Klatzow. Unfortunately, according to Triegaardt, Paeper's works were not well received by the audiences and the media (Triegaardt, 2012). Triegaardt claims that audiences preferred to support the classics and/or visiting foreign companies due to the "unfortunate tendency in South Africa to equate 'imported' with 'excellence' over and above that which is South African. This mindset may have been fostered by CAPAB Ballet's policies in the 1970s and 1980s when, in spite of abundant financial support, Triegaardt states "experimentation, innovation and the creation of a uniquely South African style and ambience from several choreographers [was substantially insufficient and] innumerable ballets [...] continued [a] Eurocentric slant in style and subject matter" (Triegaardt, 2012, p. 20). South-African themes and artists were also used in the ballets of Paeper's husband, Frank Staff (aforementioned), in *Raka* (1967), *Mantis Moon* (1970) and *Rain Queen* (1971). *Raka* re-interpreted an Afrikaans poem by N.P van Wyk Louw, *Mantis Moon* was inspired by Khoi-san paintings and *Rain Queen* told the story of a queen from a South African region, Limpopo.

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<sup>66</sup> Examples of works include *Herrie-Hulle* (1973) by Veronica Paeper, *The African Firebird* (2003) by South African choreographer, Christopher Kindo and *African Landscapes* (2010) by South African choreographer, Sean Bovim.

Unfortunately, due to his untimely death, *Rain Queen* was not realised and was rewritten by Poole in 1973.

Here, I was once again intrigued by Poole's perception of African identity. Triegaardt records Poole's programme notes,

while the legend of the rain Queen is very beautiful and richly evocative, I would find it distasteful to write an African ballet for a white South African company, I have therefore placed the action in a primitive society – anywhere. (Ibid., p. 21)

Triegaardt excuses the above comment as Poole's rejection of cultural appropriation. Historical context notwithstanding, I find it interesting how White people re-enacting the stories associated with Black culture could be considered negative, whereas Black people portraying the customs associated with White culture, such as dancing a ballet born in the court of a French king in the 1600s, could be positive. Where Poole alive today, he might have held a different viewpoint. However, I believe it is important to question the meaning of the term indigenous and what it might imply for Dance in South Africa. My response borrows from the provocative ideas of Kealiinohomoku who states in *Ballet as Ethnic Dance* (1970), that because "Western dance scholars [...] have used [ethnic] as a euphemism for [...] "heathen," "pagan," [or] "savage [they are offended by her reference of ballet as an ethnic dance] (Kealiinohomoku, 1970, p. 6). In South Africa the term indigenous has reference to the *Khoisan*, also known as *Khoikhoi* or *Khoi*, groups of people who were already present before the arrival of the Dutch and British colonials in the Cape (Adhikari, 2010). Of these individuals, Western scholars have propagated negative stereotypes in textbooks and museums – the portrayal of a Khoi woman, Sarah Baartman, in freak shows in Paris being just one case in point. The description of indigenous people often reinforced racist perspectives as these individuals are socially constructed to have oversized buttocks or unusual large-sized genitalia, physical features that far remove them from normalacy and notions of beauty associated with the aesthetic of their Western, White counterparts. Similar to Kealiinohomoku's argument,

I maintain that a negative image of indigenous people has been internalised by many South Africans who in response, prefer to see themselves as 'better than' or 'different to', and therefore separate themselves from any association with the 'other'. However, what if one were to look at the term to hold a sense of originality and of being of home? In order to be original, one would need to have an independent identity. One might then need to consider what it means to be of South Africa and South African. Imagine how ballet could change if - as outlined in chapter six of this dissertation - the dancer could perceive and believe themselves to become another or something other? The negative connotation of indigenous might change and Poole's phrase, 'to dance as South Africans', may take on an entirely new meaning. Considering the multiplicity of cultures and languages in the country today, I believe that contemporary, indigenous South African work should be portrayed in a number of new and exciting ways that could, for example include butoh.

#### South African Ballet into the future

One of the criticisms lodged against South African ballet as an art form by South African contemporary dancers is its limited steps or vocabulary which results in all ballets having the same movement and language. The possibility of being able to express a variety of abstract, concrete or personal thoughts, might therefore become difficult to grasp. In this regard, I found the thoughts of French dancer, Serge Lifar, helpful. In *Lifar on Classical Ballet* (1951) he referred to one choreographer who when tasked about this fact responded that in spoken language, conversation fillers like "ahs!" and "ohs!" express "rapture, enthusiasm, horror, surprise, stupefaction and suffering, in turn, according to text and intonation" (Lifar, 1951, p. 206). Following this thought, I believe that if ballet dancers were to understand and insert an intention behind their steps, *arabesques*, *pirouettes*, and *double tours* might be able to express new and/or a variety of meanings. Of course, a lot has to be credited to the sustaining power of a form established nearly four hundred years ago

in Europe. One could see the historical value of traditional ballets as they transport one back to noble courts, and also appreciate the magical drama of fairies and sylphes. But Triegaardt claims, "The challenge that lies ahead for us is to find contemporary themes and concepts that will rejuvenate audience interest" (Triegaardt, 2012, p. 25). With specific focus on Cape Town City Ballet, the use of indigenous themes are crucial but as discussed above, requires in my view a careful and thorough re-definition in order for the ballet dancer to feel his or her connection with their subject.

Howes expresses the importance of feelings in ballet when she claims the essential function of ballet to be "the theatrical expression of human emotion" (Glasstone, 1996, p. 10). And at the beginning of the nineteenth century, one of Diaghilev's choreographers, Michel Fokine, claimed that ballet "should explain the spirit of the actors in the spectacle [and] express the whole epoch to which the subject of the ballet belongs" (Turner, 1946, p. 48). Therefore it may be appropriate to ask, who are the current choreographers and/or directors of the ballet scene in South Africa? In Cape Town, the artistic directors are: Debbie Turner<sup>67</sup> of the Cape Academy of the Performing Arts, Sean Bovim<sup>68</sup> of Bovim Ballet, Ebrahim Medell<sup>69</sup> of the Eoan Group Theatre Company and Robin van Wyk<sup>70</sup> of Cape Town City Ballet. In Johannesburg, Dirk Badenhorst<sup>71</sup> is

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<sup>67</sup> Turner is trained in a variety of dance forms and belongs to the first generation of UCT BMUS Hons (Dance) graduates, majoring in Choreography in 2001. She established her dance company in 1997. They perform neo-classical works from a range of South African and international choreographers.

<sup>68</sup> Bovim was a soloist with CAPAB Ballet, Free Flight Dance Company and PACT Dance Company, and a principal dancer with the State Theatre Dance Company. He founded his company in 2009. Bovim choreographs in a range of styles with a strong emphasis towards classical ballet technique.

<sup>69</sup> Medell trained at the Eoan Group Theatre Company and UCT Ballet. His professional career includes working with The Fantastic Flying Fish Dance Company, NAPAC Ballet, PACT Ballet and the State Theatre Ballet Company, as well as performances in several countries in Europe. Medell established his company in 2011 and describes his choreography as contemporary-ballet fusion.

<sup>70</sup> van Wyk danced was trained at UCT Ballet and danced with NAPAC Ballet, PACT Ballet, Cape Town City Ballet and danced in Andrew Lloyd Webber's musical, *Cats* for 4 years. He became the artistic director of Cape Town City Ballet in 2008.

the chief executive of Mzansi Ballet and Mark Hawkins<sup>72</sup> is the artistic director of Moving Into Dance. I note how each of these individuals have been associated with the same ballet institutions and/or companies in South Africa. With the exception of Turner, all are male, and White, with the exception of Medell (Coloured) and van Wyk (Coloured). For me, their positionings are indicative of how little the dance scene has changed in South Africa. In relation to this dissertation, who are the dancers of Cape Town City Ballet in Cape Town in 2013? And in the making of new work for this diverse group, are they able to express a range of emotions and interpret stories that reflect a multicultural South African society? I am not in a position to give any definitive answers to these questions. However, I suggest that South African choreographers and dancers creatively unpack the South African phrase, *ubuntu*<sup>73</sup> (human-ness). By so doing we might realise the benefits from a symbiosis between dance forms, and as in the case of this study, butoh and ballet. More than that, I believe that the determination, commitment and egoistic perfectionist traits inherent in professional dancers (Kirstein, 1983, Allyn & Melville, 1984) are important attributes in excavating the answers. The tools lie within the Dance, and in the case of this dissertation, inside of butoh and ballet.

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<sup>71</sup> Badenhorst danced with CAPAB Ballet and PACT Ballet. In 2008 he established the Cape Town International Ballet competition, as well as a classical ballet and contemporary dance company, Mzansi Productions. Due to financial constraints Mzansi Productions merged with the South African Ballet Theatre to form Mzansi Ballet in 2012. He is focused on rejuvenating classical ballet in South Africa and developing Black youth to become internationally acclaimed ballet dancers.

<sup>72</sup> Hawkins danced with CAPAB Ballet and NAPAC Ballet, he was the artistic director of the Playhouse Dance Company and the Fantastic Flying Fish Company. In 2014, he became the artistic director of Moving Into Dance, a company founded in 1978 by Sylvia Glasser. The company is known for their African-contemporary style. Hawkins aims to bring a ballet focus into their training.

<sup>73</sup> *Ubuntu*, derived from a few closely related South African languages, including isixhosa and isizulu, is directly translated as 'human-ness'. It became a popular term to describe one of the ideologies of a democratic South Africa after 1994. Philosophically, *ubuntu* takes the human being as the starting point and emphasizes a universal bond of sharing, dignity and worth of all. In other words, I am because we are, could explain the reasoning behind the term.

## **CHAPTER FOUR**

### **THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK**

#### Interculturalism and Phenomenology: Tracking Paths to Butoh-Ballet

The theories of Interculturalism and Phenomenology is the focus of this chapter and supports my investigation of how butoh may shift the performance processes of some ballet dancers in Cape Town City Ballet's company. In other words, I have looked at what I believe to be the intercultural and phenomenological properties of butoh in relation to the experiences of some ballet dancers, and suggest that if these elements of butoh were imbibed by ballet dancers it could potentially shift the way they think about performance.

Interculturalism will be discussed in two parts. Firstly, this discussion will begin with an explanation of how I see intercultural elements within both butoh and ballet as dance forms. However, I am aware that the notion of Interculturalism is a rich and complex field, and according to French theatre scholar, Patrice Pavis, difficult to contain in a "unified, formal, and easily manageable theory" (Goodman & de Gay, 2000, p. 105). I am also mindful of Bharucha's insistence on examining issues relating to the "realities of history, political struggle, and [...] nationalism" (Bharucha, 2000, p. 27) when making intercultural work. Therefore, I will look at the ideas of Katrak who posits post-colonialist views but from a third world perspective. Using Katrak's *Politics of the Female Body* (2006) as my main source of information, this discussion borrows from her references to the Russian philosopher, Mikhail Bakhtin, and his notion of the body as a holder of meaning and site of resistance, as well as his philosophies on the liberatory elements of assimilating different ideologies (2006). I will also show how Katrak's analysis of the hybrid Caribbean language, patwah, could be compared to Butoh. Further, I will indicate how ballet dancers' experience of butoh could be articulated in, how Katrak refers

to, the trans-status theories upheld by De and Sarkar (Levine & Perera, 2002).

This chapter is also framed in the theory of phenomenology which acknowledges the value of personal experience. In addition, I have discovered intersecting points between my actual experience of butoh and the philosophies of phenomenology. Here, I look at the theories of culture, art and life espoused by Merleau-Ponty, which I believe may be useful in re-imagining human interaction in South Africa. During the research process of this dissertation, I became aware of how my entire life experience, which could be described as intercultural<sup>74</sup>, has contributed to the design of my worldview and academic approach. Borrowing from Schechner's explanation of the prefix 'inter', this dissertation places me in a position of flux. It is as if as if I am "on the way from something toward something else" (Schechner, 2013, p. ix). For example, with regard to my academic interpretations during the research period, I am aware of how I could potentially move beyond the lens of Interculturalism and phenomenology and include the critical theories of Gender studies in examining the data of the workshop study. This is further shown in chapter six. In the writing of this chapter, I have employed the distillation mechanisms of butoh and honed my thoughts down to one theorist within the themes of Interculturalism and phenomenology. I believe this limitation has deepened my exploration of the theories of Katrak and Merleau-Ponty and in the process, provided insight to my research question: How is butoh experienced by classical ballet dancers of Cape Town City Ballet company, in Cape Town in 2013?

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<sup>74</sup> In this context I understand interculturalism to refer to my mixed-life world.



## Interculturalism

On one level, the term interculturalism may simplistically convey a sense of meeting between two or more different cultures. The dance styles presented in this paper, butoh and ballet, hail from the opposing cultures of Europe and Asia and could fit that description. On another level, an investigation into the roots of butoh and ballet reveals their individual intercultural characters. Butoh is intercultural from the viewpoint that Hijikata and Ohno were influenced by Western avante garde artists like Genet and Artaud (Kurihara, 2000), who could be considered from French cultural frames, and particularly in Ohno's case, a further cultural marker, Christianity (Ohno & Ohno, 2004). Further still, butoh has spread across the world due to issues like colonialism and globalisation of the performing arts markets (Tompkins, 2000, p. 137). In South Africa, ballet training academies follow both Russian and British curricula, often taught by native South Africans of British and/or Dutch descent. In addition, the writings of Bharucha (1996, 2000) highlight the power imbalances and discrepancies of equality and fairness that could be found in intercultural exchanges. For me, this becomes more evident when one notes that in South Africa, ballet operates in a society that claims to be multicultural, yet still heeds to a White hegemonic class in its process and performance. Therefore, as expressed earlier in this dissertation, I have deepened my understanding of the field by examining theories around post-colonialism, feminism and race. For me, Katrak's *Politics of the Female Body* (2006), has stood out.

Katrak refers to Bhaktin's notion of the body holding meaning and his suggestion that in order for one to understand different cultures, "it is immensely important for the person who understands to be located outside the object of his or her creative understanding – in time, in space, in culture" (Katrak, 2006, p. 9). I have related Bhaktin's notion of

time, space and culture to my experience as a native<sup>75</sup> South African and a dancer. I acquired Butoh skills in Japan and returned to apply these to my dance practice at home in South Africa. Between 2003 – 2011, I was removed from South Africa in time, space and culture. My current situation finds me removed from Japan in time, space and culture. Further, when I lived in Japan my worldview shifted as I developed an appreciation of non-Western qualities, such as asymmetry and restraint. On returning to South Africa, this perspective, which some could interpret as alternative, and I interpret as an outsider's frame of reference, has in turn separated me from my local South African community, which I maintain is also Westernised. I see this stance as advantageous and agree with Bhaktin's theory that an 'outsidedness' helps with understanding different cultures. Secondly, as a contemporary dancer with no foundational ballet schooling<sup>76</sup>, my socio-economic and political history, which co-incides with apartheid, isolated me from the conventional training patterns followed in the ballet world. With broad reference to South African dancers of ballet and contemporary dance, my skills, as a solo performer for the last twenty years, further sets me apart from the majority of South African dancers whose skills are honed in ensembles and companies. Therefore, I also see myself separated from South Africa's dance community in time, space and culture.

The theories of De and Sarkar (Levine & Perera, 2002) argue for a more, what I refer to as, hands-on approach which I believe describes this dissertations processes. My arguments in this chapter, as well as the methodologies and analyses outlined ahead, are largely based on my experience. Therefore, I could argue that in spite of my 'outsidedness', I

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<sup>75</sup> I am aware of the racist connotations to the term as demonstrated in the "Natives Land Act, 1913" that decreed that only certain areas of South Africa could be owned by natives, understood as Black people. This resulted in less than 10% of the land given to Blacks. An abhorrence, as Black people constitute about 70% of the South African population. In this instance I use the term broadly and in reference to South Africa as the country of my birth.

<sup>76</sup> I participated in ballet classes with Cape Town City Ballet at the beginning of my independent career in 1994, six years after I had begun my formal training in release-based contemporary dance with Jazzart Dance Theatre in Cape Town.

am also positioned as an insider who is subjective.

I found further support for using butoh in my investigation with the ballet dancers when considering Katrak's references to Bakhtin's discussion of how the body can be used to resist domination and assert agency. Katrak pointed out how "female protagonists' [...] resist patriarchal domination via the use of silence, illness, voice, and so on" (Katrak, 2006, p. 32). In parallel ways, I believe that butoh's use of silence as well as an aged or deformed body as an aesthetic, has rebelled against the male projection and understanding of beauty and strength implicit in ballet. For example, the image of the broad shouldered, muscular ideal male, and by way of contrast, petite and fragile female, places a certain ideal for the sexes which may imply an ideal for male and female dancing bodies. Bakhtin theorises about a carnivalesque body, in other words, a physicality that is drawn from folk culture, and states that it operates "in one sensuous image [of] life and death as a continually renewing process of generation" (Ibid.). In like manner, butoh was conceived from elements of daily life and the realities of the Japanese people in a particular historic moment. Recurring motifs are the exploration of life, death and rebirth, and as such, the identity of butoh has remained fluid. Katrak explains how Bakhtin's understanding of such bodily expression is, "an important means of liberating human consciousness from a verbal, hierarchical perception of the work [to] opening up the possibility for a horizontal understanding of change" (Ibid.). For me, butoh's use of imagination and its application in performance demonstrate one way of shifting the hegemonic position of ballet's employ of imagination and action. As such, I believe it proposes the possibility for implementing lateral changes in Dance.

As stated at the outset, Interculturalism cannot be defined in simple terms of two or more voices in an artistic work or form, and this study does not pretend to make conclusive statements in that regard. In support of ongoing developments between butoh and ballet, I refer to the "importance [Bakhtin gives] to dialogue, [and] the open-endedness of [...]"

discussion rather than closure" (Ibid., p. 31). Katrak also pointed out how Bakhtin's heteroglossic approach recognizes,

different ideological configurations [...and claims this] is liberating for colonized people since it disrupts any hegemonic truth-claims [...and] racist superiority. (Ibid., p. 32)

In my view, challenging the ballet dancers of my workshops with butoh's philosophies and informing them of alternative perceptions of the body with regard to its immateriality and potential for metamorphosis, may be "crucial [...steps] toward overcoming racist and sexist oppression" (Ibid., p. 31) embedded in ballet. I have previously given an example of acts that I perceived as racist in *Coppelia*, and will note but not extensively detail how sexism is portrayed in traditional ballet stories, such as *Swan Lake*, *Sleeping Beauty*, *The Nutcracker* and *Giselle*, where male-female relationships are often imbalanced. In South Africa today, I believe the general Dance scene could be described as "postcolonial [...] whose boundaries are drawn with colonial influence" (Ibid. p. 38), such as the Jazzart Dance Theatre (Cape Town), Moving Into Dance, (Johannesburg), The Fantastic Flying Fish Dance Company (Durban)<sup>77</sup>, and First Physical Theatre (Grahamstown).

Considering how artistic endeavours could reflect the ethos of people, this gradual advance to an intercultural sensibility in Dance may be one way for South Africans to learn to respect and make associations with and between difference, such as race, class, religion, language and gender.

With reference to the multiple colonisation of the Caribbean, Katrak argues that it was the site where various languages were imposed and subordinated, eventually creating a Creole language, patwah, "that [has become] vitally part of Caribbean cultural identity" (Katrak, 2006, p. 30). Similarly, butoh envelopes different cultural influences that include

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<sup>77</sup> The Fantastic Flying Fish Dance Company shut down some years ago due to funding constraints and no longer exists.

religion and Western dance styles, yet, it is a dance completely associated with the Japanese identity. Katrak's reference to the book, *Lionheart Gal* (1986) and its explanation of patwah, has been helpful to articulate my understanding of butoh. I believe that, in spite of the largely Buddhist approach to the lives of Japanese people, and their focus on the communal whole and not the individual, butoh's rebellion to the Japanese status quo could be seen in its insistent and persistent research into authentic movement. This, like patwah, "expresses the refusal of people to imitate a coloniser, their insistence on creation, [and] their movement from obedience towards revolution" (Ibid., p. 35). Ironically, and in sharp contrast, ballet insists on a commonality in form, structure and ideology of the group, and works toward stifling the voice of the individual. Katrak refers to how the translation of patwah into English - or in the case of this dissertation, translating butoh into ballet - created "an equal relationship between their language and the language of the powerful, [...as well as the ability] to communicate their needs and demands" (Ibid.). Considering that ballet inscribes the body with the text of the colonizer and suppresses the individual voice, one could question how it contributes to a South African society that claims to give voice to a multiplicity of cultures? Butoh may very well be a tool to stimulate individual notions that may be deemed inappropriate in ballet performance conventions, such as expressing pain or anger, and could be used as an impetus in establishing connections with everyday realities of diverse people living in this country.

Katrak also refers to De and Sarkar's discussion on how lived experiences in particular locations at specific points in time can affect change. I borrow their theories to describe the different dance worlds that Butoh and ballet inhabit and show how they can interact to work toward affecting the social order. For example, many have written about the White hegemonic attitude in ballet as well as its hierarchy in Western Dance (Craighead, 2006, Pather, 2006, Sichel, 2011, van Wyk, 2012) that needs to be challenged. De and Sarkar argue that "resistance and social change arise only from an entanglement with regimes of dominant

knowledge/power, not outside them” (Katrak, 2006, p. 12). As opposed to reworking a ballet through the medium of Butoh or contemporary dance (Middelow, 2007), this study directly confronted ballet dancers with the unfamiliar practice of butoh. Considering that Cape Town City Ballet is largely concerned with performances in a classical ballet style, one could postulate that up until the time of this workshop study in March 2013, the company’s processes and movements in the studio space had been relatively predictable. I believe that my initiative to introduce butoh and the participation of the ballet dancers implicitly and potentially challenges “dominant histories but also re-author them” (Katrak, 2006, p. 12).

De and Sarkar also show how individuals, called “trans-status [...] transition from one (economic, social, political) status to another [and] redefine their places [and] spaces (ibid. p. 13). In their explanation, places indicate “lived experience [...] where people, cultures, languages [and] artistic expressions unfold” (Ibid. p. 12). I use their definition to describe the activities of the four individuals of the workshop study who engaged with the philosophies of Hijikata and Ohno, foreign Japanese cultural aesthetics, as well as the unfamiliar dance language called butoh. I am aware that globalisation (see footnote 40) has narrowed the distance between familiar and foreign elements. However, the discussion of De and Sarkar bears relevance when one makes application to the particular place, space and time of this workshop study. Chapter Six will cite examples that I have interpreted as shifts in the ‘fixed’ positioning of the ballet dancers whom I believe implicitly became trans-status subjects by engaging in an activity, butoh, experienced for the first time by dancers in the history of Cape Town City Ballet company, in Cape Town, South Africa, in 2013. I believe their mindsets shifted as they negotiated a different style of movement, and focused on the internal stimulation as opposed to an external technical precision.

De and Sarkar also point out how “assembling familiar and new practices [could...] reassert place” (Ibid., p. 13) and it could therefore be noted that the dancers were challenged in the familiar setting of their dance studio. As stated previously, in South Africa, British colonialists imposed their culture with ballet and in the process, subjugated the cultural expressions of the indigenous people. Their actions could be described as wanting to fill a cultural space that they believed to be empty. De and Sarkar argue how such spaces, which in relation to the subject of this dissertation, I have interpreted as the studio of Cape Town City Ballet, could be reappropriated. For me, the dancers participation in this study temporarily changed the studio, the space of their artistic expression. I believe that in the long-term, consistent engagements of this nature could change the hierarchy embedded in Dance, and possibly create and sustain more collaborative efforts and respect of differences across techniques.

It is my opinion that a consistent practice and integration of butoh techniques to ballet could potentially lead towards social change and the humanity that interculturalists (Bharucha, 2000, Pavis, 1996) strive toward.

### Phenomenology

According to Merleau-Ponty, economic and political infrastructures “are only another way of designating human relationships” (Merleau-Ponty, 1964, p. 152). I believe these factors have also sustained the hierarchy of ballet. This becomes significant within South Africa where there are several cultures, each with their own set of values and traditions. In this regard, Merleau-Ponty’s notions of culture, art and life as espoused in *Sense and Non-Sense* (1964), could be useful to ballet that, with reference to Triegaardt, is concerned with re-imagining human interaction in the country. Merleau-Ponty described culture as “the progressive awareness of our multiple relationships with other people and the world, rather than...extramundane techniques” (Ibid.). I believe

that some ballets may be overly concerned with distracting ones attention from the disorderly and complex realities of life through its stories of magic realism and emphasis on displaying dances that seem to always lift off the ground, a place which I associate with daily life. Like Merleau-Ponty, I think that ballet could therefore run the risk of becoming “a religion of the beautiful [...] if it refuses to mingle intimately with life” (Ibid., p, 43). In addition, it may need to re-negotiate its portrayal of roles and relationships between people by attempting to view life from a multitude of perspectives. I believe that this process is not formulaic, and agree with Merleau-Ponty’s reference to the French philosopher, Jean-Paul Sartre, who claims, “the work of art belongs to the world of imagination, that in this sense it transforms the prose of daily life” (Ibid.). For me, an application of butoh principles could furnish different artistic techniques towards what I understand as an ongoing process of transformation, especially as one of its core principles lies in its focus on everyday life (Ohno & Ohno, 2004). Sartre goes on to explain that utilising alternative expressions to transform daily life will be problematic. However, Merleau-Ponty reminds one of the value of art when he refers to the French novelist, André Gide, who says, “there are no problems in art for which the work of art is not an adequate solution” (Merleau-Ponty, 1964, p. 43). According to Sartre, an artist is able to unite the imaginative and real worlds in their work if they are able to root these different expressions to one source. He describes that source as, “the way [the artist] has chosen to treat the world, other people, death and time” (Ibid.). I will show how these concepts are dealt with in butoh.

Schusterman’s clarifies Merleau-Ponty’s notion of the world when he states,

The world is more like a context, a setting, a background, or a horizon for all the things there are, all the things that can be intended and given to us.  
(Shusterman, 2005, p. 43)

I believe that one Western viewpoint of the world could be interpreted through its predominant religion, Christianity. Ballet was largely influenced by Christianity (Turner, 1946), whereas Zen-Buddhism may



be seen as one of the impacts on butoh (Fraleigh, 1999). According to Merleau-Ponty, "Christianity [is] the most resolute negation of the conceived infinite" (Merleau-Ponty, 1964, p. 97). To me, this means that a Christian perspective of the world is in concrete terms. Kirstein describes ballet to focus on definition and clarity (Kirstein, 1983). On the other hand, according to Fraleigh's experience, butoh could be described as a "mystical union with nature" (Fraleigh, 1999, p. 51) that is ultimately unattached to worldly objects and thus more free. In my view, butoh's undefined and abstract movements, could be useful in creating a sense of borderlessness and freedom in one's dance that unlike ballet, may lead to a greater tolerance of difference.

Secondly, I have correlated the introspective, somatic aesthetic of butoh to Shusterman's comparison of how somaaesthetics contribute to how one sees the world and people. He claims,

if somaaesthetics deflection of attention to our bodily consciousness involves a temporary retreat from the world of action, this retreat can greatly advance our self-knowledge and self-use so that we will return to the world as more skillful observers and agents. (Shusterman, 2005, p. 172)

I believe adding Merleau-Ponty's explanation of culture - an awareness of different people and the world - enables one to physically experience different qualities or characters. These are key aspects of butoh and this kind of investigation could positively contribute towards exercising a humanity in one's dance. Thirdly, butoh's exploration of death may also be useful to ballet. Ohno described the death scene of *Divine* (1960) choreographed by Hijikata, as an interweaving of life and death. He says, "My dance encounter is with Mankind, an encounter with Life" (Fraleigh & Nakamura, 2006, p. 32). Merleau-Ponty held a similar view of death and in reference to the German philosopher, Georg Hegel, Merleau-Ponty claims, "To plumb our awareness of death, we must transmute it into life, [and] "interiorize" it" (Merleau-Ponty, 1964, p. 67). I agree with Fraleigh's reference to Ohno's dance and also believe that "Death [...] unearths a more profound existence" (Fraleigh & Nakamura, 2006, p. 90), thereby creating an inevitable and perpetual continuum between the

two. In many ballets, on the other hand, death may be perceived as negative, a definite conclusion to life and something to avoid. In my view, this may contribute to a fear of death which in any event, remains inevitable for everyone. In terms of performance, these themes would therefore always have relevance to the broader society. I maintain that understanding a cycle between Life and Death may therefore prove to be more uplifting. I also believe that a phenomenological perspective of Time may be able to invigorate ballet. In talking about how the passage of time (with particular reference to people who died in the war) Merleau-Ponty theorises that one can create,

a timeless memory in which the things they did mingle with what they might have done, given the direction of their lives. (Merleau-Ponty, 1964, p. 151)

I appropriate this thought to express how ballet's hankering to old traditions might be re-energised and contemporised if they were to resist presenting it according to its last form of expression. Instead, I suggest that they imaginatively add to the traditions by for example, looking at how *butoh* does not limit the dancer to a particular or real timeframe. According to Fraleigh (2006), Hijikata describes a *butoh* dancer's sense of time as elastic, and explains that it allows a dancer to go into the history of their body and be interpreted through the body. I interpret this elasticity as giving the performer the possibility to jump between different realities and embody the past, present and future in performance. Shusterman further explains Merleau-Ponty's phenomenological viewpoint of time as signifying,

the full immediate experience of temporality that we have at any instant [that...] is composed of....*primal impression*, *retention*, and *protention*. These three abstract parts...are inseparable. (Shusterman, 2005, p. 136)

I understand this to basically mean that our state of existing within time always includes a reflection of the past (*retention*) and a projection (*protention*) into the future. With regard to the future, I find Shusterman's further explanation to be relevant to the central question of this dissertation - how is *butoh* experienced by classical ballet dancers of Cape Town City Ballet, in Cape Town in 2013? Shusterman notes *protention* as "[giving] us the first and original sense of "something

coming” [...opening] the very dimension of the future and thus makes full-fledged anticipation possible” (Ibid., p. 137). With this in mind, I imagine how butoh could shift the performance processes of ballet so that the audience could anticipate something different in the way it is embodied. In a South African context, could one perhaps describe this sense of expectation as hope?

In the world of ballet, it is not unusual to find performers concerned with expressing perfection and as a consequence, spend many laborious hours repeating the same action. This general attitude might be explained by Sokolowski's assertion that philosophy contains “a life [that remains] legitimate” (Sokolowski, 2000, p. 2). For me, this means that the actual life of the dancer becomes validated through their intimate engagement with life. According to Yoshito,

A good dancer [...creates] no artificial distinction between their personal lives and performance. [...] I don't believe that dance can be mastered solely by means of regular workouts in a rehearsal studio. It's only when dance and everyday life merge as one that an authentic portrait of a dancer emerges. (Ohno & Ohno, 2004, p. 158)

Perhaps Yoshito's thoughts stem from Merleau-Ponty's notion that “We never get away from our life” (Merleau-Ponty, 1964, p. 25). And according to Sartre, life requires risk and creative effort (Merleau-Ponty, 1964, p. xvi) that, I believe, has the ability to transform the dancer as well as the audience.

Fraleigh described ballet as a form of theatre that distances audiences because it is “filtered through centuries of movement styles and character development” (Fraleigh & Nakamura, 2006, p. 72). On the other hand, she claims that butoh creates a more intimate relationship between the audience and the performer. She describes how audiences became self reflective after observing Hijikata's construction of pain and absurdity. She also notes how the spirituality of Ohno's performances became a visceral experience for audiences. Fraleigh says, “one enters into morphing states of awareness through [observing Butoh] performances” (Ibid.). I believe that butoh meets Merleau-Ponty's

definition of expression. He claims it to be “like a step taken in the fog – no one can say where, if anywhere, it will lead (Merleau-Ponty, 1964, p. 3). I believe that a gradual progression is implied that relates to Merleau-Ponty’s explanation of culture mentioned above, and note that similarly, applying butoh to ballet is a step-by-step process.

To summarise, this chapter has shown how this study of Butoh-Ballet, is framed within theories of Interculturalism and Phenomenology. It is intercultural because of the multiplicity of influences in each form. I also referred to the postcolonial theories of Katrak and others to show how butoh confronts issues like the patriarchal hegemony of ballet by suggesting a reimagining of the body from a non-Western perspective. This chapter also compared butoh to *patwah*, and re-inforced butoh as a dance language on its own terms. In terms of Phenomenology, I have largely borrowed from Merleau-Ponty texts to show how butoh is able to enhance the performance processes of ballet dancers and re-inscribe its cultural values in the process. I have discussed how butoh can reshape a concrete worldview through its sense of borderlessness. I have also shown how butoh’s somatic approach and elements of embodiment could enhance one’s knowledge of another and potentially increase one’s tolerance of different people. In addition, butoh expresses an interrelationship with life and death which in death’s inevitability will hopefully sustain a truth that bears relevance to society. Lastly, butoh could rejuvenate ballet, which may be perceived as outdated, by adding its qualities of mystery and imagination, and potentially fill dancers and audiences with a sense of hope. In the following chapter, I will describe what the ballet dancers experienced in the butoh workshops I taught.

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## **CHAPTER FIVE**

### **METHODOLOGY**

I chose to conduct five workshops with a sample group of four ballet dancers from Cape Town City Ballet in Cape Town in 2013. I notated my interactions which included video material, individual semi structured interviews (see Appendix C) conducted eight weeks after the workshops, questionnaires (see Appendix D), as well as conversations in passing through the corridors of UCT School of Dance. Over the years that I have been associated with Cape Town City Ballet (see footnote<sup>78</sup>) I have watched many of their performances at various theatres in Cape Town. During the period of this dissertation, the performances I had seen included two ballets, *Coppelia* (9 January, 2013, Artscape Theatre, Cape Town) and *Giselle* (7 February, 2013, Masque Theatre, Cape Town). I also watched a rehearsal (1 February, 2013) of *Giselle* and formerly observed a company ballet class (15 February, 2013) at Cape Town City Ballet's studios. In addition, since my association as a dance scholar at UCT School of Dance<sup>79</sup> in 2011, I have on a more informal basis looked into several of their classes and rehearsals through the glass of the company's studio, in which each of the participants was dancing. My source of data also arose from programmes and newspaper clippings (see Appendix E) in which either their performance or the production as whole was commented upon. During a fifteen-month period, I also kept a

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<sup>78</sup> In March 2013, I was unfamiliar with most dancers in Cape Town City Ballet, however, I do have a historical association with the company that extends back to the 1990s. In 1993 former *prima ballerina assoluta* of CAPAB Ballet (as Cape Town City Ballet was formerly known between 1963-1997), Phyllis Spira, who was heading the school's training program, engaged me to teach a series of release-based contemporary dance classes at the Winter School. In 1995, Veronica Paeper invited my independent dance company, Jagged Dance, to perform one of our repertoire works, *There's a Wall In the way* (1995), alongside two CAPAB Ballet works at the Baxter Theatre, Cape Town. At that time, the current artistic director of Cape Town City Ballet, Robin van Wyk, was a company dancer and Triegaardt was the executive director of CAPAB. Between 1995 to 2000, I also participated in the ballet company's morning class lead by previous Bolshoi Ballet Company ballerina, Nadia Krylova. In addition, Triegaardt often supported my independent artistic endeavors by allowing me to rehearse in the school's studios at no charge.

<sup>79</sup> Cape Town City Ballet is housed on the same premises of the UCT School of Dance.

reflexive journal of my observations of the four individuals in which I recorded highlights or points of significance that I considered reflected their performing ability. With regard to their performances, I was aware of how much they smiled in order to portray a sense of ease and lightness in their dance. I noted how facial expressions, such as smiles or frowns, often seemed forced and disconnected from the level of physical commitment required from a particular dance step, and/or oversimplified the interactions of individuals on stage. I also noticed how the movements were always projected forward, extended, and elevated from the ground, in order for the audience to 'see' what was being presented on stage. On the other hand, I interpreted their participation in company classes to have more of a personal focus as I often observed the dancers looking down, as if they wanted to 'feel' their exercises. However, this kind of introspection seemed to be more evident at the *ballet-barre* exercises at the beginning of the class. Here, dancers position themselves directly behind each other along several portable stands, used for hand-balance, that are positioned across the floor of the studio. The introspection became less evident when the stands are removed and the dance moved across the floor. These kind of exercises are more similar to the movements required in performances on stage and therefore, the dancers' focus was more external with their focus in the mirror. Other than the choreographer or teacher's critique, they gauge the perfection of their body shape and the precise execution of movements by what they see in the mirror. I believe that much could be written about the role of the mirror on the psyche of a ballet dancer, and how that relates to establishing interpersonal connections in performance. However, that will be reserved for the future. At this point in time, this chapter is testing whether butoh methodologies are able to shift the way they 'see' and 'feel' their bodies in performance. I am deliberately going through the details of one aspect of my methodology. This focus has allowed me to present the details of the workshop in a phenomenological way.

### Events Leading up to the Workshops

Prior to commencement, I requested permission from the company's management body; Triegaardt and the artistic director, Robin van Wyk, to conduct a series of five butoh workshops with them. The initial purpose was to digitally record, question and observe how their bodies received butoh, a dance form that to my mind, countered all of their perceptions and expressions of dance. According to Triegaardt and van Wyk, the company members were largely overworked and rehearsing more than one production at that time. I was aware that most ballet dancers are used to following instructions received from the management body with minimum resistance, however, in order for this process to be authentic on all levels, I explained that the individual motivations of the participants would be significant and thus required voluntary participation. Both Triegaardt and van Wyk supported the project and expedited its immediate execution. According to Triegaardt, this was the first time an experiment of such nature was conducted on the African continent and on that basis, she was happy to be involved (Professor Elizabeth Triegaardt in direct conversation, 18 April 2013, Cape Town). On March 19<sup>th</sup>, 2013, Triegaardt and van Wyk agreed to end the company class ten minutes earlier in order for me to propose the research topic to the entire company. In addressing Cape Town City Ballet's company of dancers, I explained butoh as a Japanese contemporary dance form that challenged a Western perception of Dance by approaching movement from an internal and more individualistic perspective. I also explained that the work would not be strenuous or extremely cardio-vascular in impact. Further, I assured them that their efforts would not be exhausting, nor result in injury. To add artistic credibility to my proposal, I also briefly alluded to my long-time association with Triegaardt and van Wyk (see footnote<sup>49</sup>). The

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environment of the ballet company and school was therefore not an unfamiliar territory for me and I am aware of how my previous association with them might have influenced their support of my research. The workshop comprised of four individuals<sup>80</sup>: one twenty-three year-old male, Ashley Adams, one twenty-three year-old female, Brenda Black, and two twenty-four year-old females, Cindy Caesar and Dianna David. We mutually agreed to do five ninety-minute workshops on 26, 27 March, and 2, 5, 9 April 2013.

When one considers that my prior association with the ballet company had always been from a peripheral perspective, I saw this self-initiated engagement with Cape Town City Ballet, in the company studio, at the University of Cape Town's School of Dance, as an opportunity to shift my notions of Dance and performance into a more centralised positioning, which ballet seems to hold. This viewpoint borrows from In *Under Western Eyes* (1984) where the feminist, Chandra Talpade Mohanty, writes, "It is not the center that determines the periphery, but the periphery that, in its boundedness, determines the center. (Mohanty, 1984, p. 353). As an "other" (sic) South African, Mohanty's notions of redefining Western hegemonic positions helps to support the reasons behind my re-association with Cape Town City Ballet.

I then set out to conduct five workshops in butoh, well aware of how the ballet dancers might consider it as a new and alien dance form. Each workshop had a theme pre-established by myself. The first session was entitled, *I (Eye) Know this Body*, the second, *All Body – Forward, Back, Up, Down*, the third, *Lessons from the Inanimate*, the fourth, *(An)other Body*, and the fifth, *Dance of the Flower*. These workshops will be explained in chronological order, including details of the physical exercises, visual stimuli, music, tactile materials and anecdotal

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<sup>80</sup> To protect the professional identity of the dancers, pseudonyms have been used. I will deliberately refer to them by their first names in order to reflect a sense of intimacy between the participants and myself.



information. Each session was constructed around a theme that fleshed out the idea of perception and specifically looked at one's understanding, expression and utilisation of consciousness in dance. This idea of perception also extends to how one sees with both literal and figurative eyes. Gradually, this intensified notion of sight became a metaphor for awareness of self, as well as of animate and inanimate worlds. The sub-text of this theme of perception was to realise the multi-faceted nature of oneself and one's surroundings. Simply stated; there are many ways to see one thing. As the duration of each session was limited to ninety minutes, the experience of the dancers could best be described as an introduction to selected concepts of butoh. My main aim was to convey the butoh principles of perception, in terms of how one sees. Following that, the idea of lateral perception, with regard to how alternative approaches are developed from understanding different ways of seeing, was conveyed.

The largest part of the methodology in this chapter is based on my interpretation of their actual engagement with various exercises given in the workshops. The body became the primary tool for understanding how classical ballet dancers experienced the aesthetically contrasting approach of butoh. In future writing, I will expand on how butoh could emerge as a performance methodology. In these workshops, my methods derive either directly or implicitly from what I acquired from Yoshito, with whom I also performed (see Appendix F) and was closely associated in Japan, between 2003 to 2011. Yoshito followed the original teachings established by Hijikata and Ohno without deviation. Bearing this extraction in mind, I may be described as a second generation practitioner. Currently, I seem to be uniquely positioned in South Africa, as the first South African dancer/choreographer/teacher and burgeoning academic, to have acquired such an empirical butoh experience at such close range over a period of eight years. As a consequence, my classes were structured with several layers of contextual information. For example, I was able to relate several stories about Hijikata, Ohno and the Japanese culture. A wide score of music, narratives, pictures and

open-ended, Zen-like phrases, called *kōan* in Japanese, is consciously used to engage the understanding and imagination of the participants. These facets act separately or in combinations, in order to stimulate mental imagery and emotions, as well as provoke a sense of doubt or hesitation within themselves that serve to eliminate potential over-confidence before delving into an exercise. In each session, the dancers individually explored specific exercises that challenged their somatic sense of gravity, weight, time and space, as well as their psychological attitudes to beauty and perfection. This bricolage methodology enables the dancers to have simultaneous stimulation points, and I believe that adds complex twists and depth to their work (Denzin & Lincoln, 2011, p. 5). My facilitation is also in response to their reactions to and experiences of the workshop. As a researcher, I have to probe several layers of behaviour and realise the interplay between my ideas and what is offered during the workshop process. Considering the intimate, self-styled association I have with *butoh*, the workshops are deliberately described in a narrative style. I have not referenced statements in the conventional manner. In several instances, I have qualified statements made by myself in the first person.

### Workshop One

Entitled, *I (Eye) Know This Body*, immediate attention is drawn to the physical and figurative landscapes of one's vision or point of view. The planned activities of the first day has a two-fold intention. On the one side, it aims to invite the dancers into the process by keeping the movements in a sphere that they are accustomed to. Countering that, the exercises also introduces aspects that are foreign and even taboo to classical ballet dancers.

The first exercise intends to give their bodies a consciousness of movement that was substantially different from ballet in its aesthetic. Conventional *ballet-barre* work, like *tondues* (to point the toe with an extended leg), *pliés* (to bend the knees outward with the back held

straight) and special arm and foot positions are avoided. In addition, warm-up exercises that may have been associated with release-based contemporary dance, such as the head leading body rolls through the spine, pelvis drops to the floor, flexed or turned in feet, as well as or even transferring the body weight onto the hands for acrobatic-type movements, are all completely sidestepped. Instead, the dancers are presented with a sequence of movements that I had conceived as an appropriate warm-up to butoh. Most ballet dancers focus on large muscle groups, like thighs and the back. I construct repetitive sets of smaller movements that isolates individual parts of the front, back and side body, enabling the dancers to bring their attention to smaller areas of the body and realise the possibilities of motion or release within that region. For example, a self-shiatsu technique of using the shoulder to tap a pressure point behind the ear, as well as manipulating the shoulder joints in forward, backward and circular motions, releases the tension often held in the neck down into the shoulder cuff muscles. Similar kinds of detailed maneuvers are applied to the chest, ribcage, central core, waist, thighs and feet. Moreover, many repetitions of several distinctive movements, creates an alternative body awareness and sense of concentration in the group.

At several junctures in the session, the dancers conventional notions of good and bad techniques are challenged. This is created by placing their focus in areas that they would normally not consider or take for granted. For example, ballet dancers are expected to portray long, elegant necks, and drop their shoulders. In the workshop, however, they are required to become aware of the neck's length and create release by purposefully lifting their shoulders up to their ears, such as in the self-shiatsu method mentioned above. Other 'unusual' (sic) movements involved standing on one leg whilst placing the thigh of the opposite leg at a right-angle to the hips, whilst holding it up by placing both hands beneath the thigh. They also move their feet in a clear right-to-left direction, as opposed to the circular *ron de jambe*-like movements that occur below the knee in *barre* exercises. When standing on one leg, balance is not attained by 'pulling

up in the leg', a phrase that could be associated with ballet classes. Instead, I ask them to place their 'hearts over the thighs' and realise an alternative approach in achieving balance. In addition, the knees are bent for the duration of the first exercise, in order to create a different sensation of support and weight in the lower half of the body. Intermittently, movements akin to yoga sun salutation exercises are done. At these times, they maintain bent knees and raise their arms above their heads. Instead of asking them to straighten their legs and look up, they are guided to 'have the hearts look up between the hands'. Following that I ask them to place their hearts back in their chests - a movement that returns them to a neutral position with the arms at the side of the body.

From the beginning, I encourage the dancers to become aware of a circle of energy that revolves around their bodies. For me, an astute awareness of this moving dynamic that surrounds the body, creates the "possibility of..[altering] the shape...and [imagining] other...modes of being (Elin Diamond in Goodman & de Gay, 2000, p. 67). The cycle of energy moves from the toes to across the top of the feet, then up along the calves and thighs, along the chest, across the face and over the top of the head. It then moves down the back of the head, pushing the shoulders into the back, and continues to underneath their feet and on to the toes. According to the science of metaphysics, this consciousness means a "variation in a field of existence already instituted...that only intervenes in the actions by which they transform it" (Merleau-Ponty, 1970, p. 47). For me, altering the perception of balance and weight is one way to make them aware of this intervention. For example, when they are seated on their knees, they realise that they could retain the sensation of standing by imagining the toes replaced by the knees and continuing the cycle of energy along the front and back bodies. Similar ideas are mentioned when their hands are on the floor and they become mindful of their weight and strength in distinctive body parts. With strength I am not referring to muscular ability. However, an awareness of

the body's circular energy as well as a tactile perception of the floor and air around them, helps them to mediate changes in direction or gravity.

I have a clear intention of not isolating the dancers through seemingly esoteric thoughts, but to connect ideas to their bodies through concrete and recognisable actions. The next step of the workshop, therefore, extends the independent movements of the warm-up into a dance sequence. I believe that the unconventional nature of the preparatory exercises, compared to their customary way of warming up in a ballet class, triggers a tacit sense of concentration and focus. In the combination, I remind them that the limitations of the body could be used in a liberatory way. This means that because body parts would always follow its natural trajectory, one could focus on the starting point of movement and not be overly concerned about the end result. For example, if one were to push the wrist hard enough, the arm would go into a normal swing action and not continue to move in the direction of the first stimulus. In the sequence, the dancers instigated movement with weight and then used their eyes to follow the line of action. This leads to a natural flow of movement, leaving them seeming unconcerned about making meticulous steps.

Moreover, the music and lyrics of the combination invested the dancers with a sense of purpose. *Cucurucucu Paloma*, sung by Spanish singer, Caetano Veloso, accompanies the dance. After learning the movement sequence and repeating it a few times, the dancers are told the meaning of the song. The lyrics, '*cucurucucu*' refers to the sound of a dove, and '*paloma*' was the Spanish word for 'dove'. The song told the story of a tortured man whose soul was embodied in a dove, that very early every morning cried for his lost love. The dance combination ends with them facing the wall and in order to start again, the dancers have to leave the wall and return into the space. At this point in the combination, they are required to walk with a sense of looking, as if they were searching for their lost love. This additional focus of looking introduces the central principle of perception, around which all of the subsequent workshops

are constructed. The dancers thus begin to shift from familiar body expressions and more alternative ways of looking are devised.

Literary phrases, as well as real life and fictional stories, are told to introduce the concept of discovering another kind of sight. I have no qualification to assert any linguistic claims, however, I believe that phrases in language can inform us of the body's wisdom. In the workshop I expanded on the English phrase, 'eyes in the back of your head', and related a story of an American friend who on his first visit to Cape Town, was walking along the beachfront when he suddenly sensed that he had to duck. As he did, a baseball bat swung above his head. I then ask them to imagine an eye behind their backs and look at their surroundings from that perspective. The concept then grows to include eyes underneath their feet. The exercises involve their looking at the space as well as themselves. In their movement they try to suggest the various qualities of the eye, such as its sensitivity, the importance of blinking, and its ability to see things up close and far away. At each stage, the exercises are supported by music that ranges from Zen-like meditative sounds of nature to variations of classical music. In addition, the sounds also play on their psyche and suit the strategy of gradually introducing more unusual elements. For example, *Air on Step*, by the German composer, Johann Sebastian Bach – used for exploring the eyes underneath the feet – is more than likely familiar to them, however, the rendition of American vocalist and conductor, Bobby McFerrin, may be less so. The musical piece, *Fratres*, by the Estonian classical composer, Arvo Pärt, is also used to try and subconsciously inform their movement with a sensitive and paired down quality.

The individualistic character of the eye is also emphasised through stories. For the first time, I speak about Hijikata and Ohno and explain how they both had different styles of walking. I describe how Hijikata lifted his knees quite high, whereas Ohno seemed to glide across the floor. "If you had eyes beneath you feet, and you do, how would you walk?" I ask. The dancers are also encouraged to consider their reasons

for movement, and reminded that an awareness of the eyes qualities could assist them to that end. To expand, I briefly describe the tetraplegic character of the French film, *Intouchables* (Eric Toledano, 2011), who could not rely on the use of his body for any form of expression. I also point out that the eyes always communicate our thoughts and how even the eyes of a dog can show emotions like shame, sadness and love. Consequently, they are asked to show emotions in their feet and back whilst looking at the space and themselves. Once they seemed to settle in their movement with concepts such as the back looking at the face, or the feet looking at the heart, they return to familiar everyday actions. In several workshops Yoshito repeatedly states, "Butoh is rooted in daily life" (Ohno Yoshito, Workshops, Tokyo, 2004, 2005, 2006, 2009, 2010). With this in mind, the eyes are explored in everyday actions such as walking, sitting and standing.

In reference to Brecht, the final stages of the workshop once again insert the "unfamiliar into the familiar" (Bharucha, 2000, p. 19). The dancers are required to revisit the previous combination and search for love with additional eyes. This time it is danced to an English soundtrack that holds the intention of the workshop in its title, *Her Eyes are Underneath the Ground*<sup>81</sup>, by the American band, Anthony and the Johnsons. To end, the sequence incorporated a movement starting from a sitting position to ending in a standing posture. Echoing the title of the soundtrack, and speaking metaphorically, I ask the dancers to "stand on their eyes and really see the ground beneath their feet". In the final exercise the focus shifts to the upper body. Like the start, they are required to raise their arms above their heads and slowly drop it back down to end at the side body. The rise of the arms is initiated by the symbolic sense of their 'heart's eye lifting and looking upwards'. Returning the hearts into the chests initiates a sense of downward action

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<sup>81</sup> The songs on this album were directly inspired by the performance works of Ohno Kazuo.

of the arms. By maintaining an awareness of the energy that flows up the front body, the torso resists a complete collapse. After twenty slow counts the arms arrive at the side body but the dancers are asked to continue a descending motion, until the feeling of weight and wait allow for a release in the wrists. The music comes to an end, and in the silence, I modulate my voice to make paralinguistic sounds like, “*whoo*” and “*shoo*”, as if their relaxation could be heard in an actual sound and triggered by the expulsion of breath.

### Workshop Two

The session of the following day entitled, *All Body – Forward, Back, Up, Down*, continues with the conscious use of the breath as an impetus for movement or stillness. However, this extends into a concept of creating an inverted perspective of the body, which then enables them to see themselves and the space beyond conventional barriers. The dancers are also challenged to work with the significations of their body parts. In addition, concepts that revolve around indecision and abstractions of the universe, are fleshed out in several inter-connecting movements. Through a gradual process, the dancers are guided into a realm that requires unconventional levels of physical and mental investment. In short, Merleau-Ponty's thoughts on embodiment serves as a framework for this workshop. In *Phenomenology of Perception* (1945) he claims that we know not through our experience, and neither through our intellect.

At the start of the class, the customary upward and outward expressions of classical ballet dancers, are completely reversed. I request that they look at themselves and the space in an upside-down position. In order to achieve this, they need to have a clear downward intention, and aim to replace their feet with their heads. Unlike a handstand that is primarily an issue of balance, the purpose of this exercise is to discover ‘the world beneath and above their feet’. This conundrum becomes more obtuse when they are required to ‘rise off the floor’ and use the eyes on the head, back and feet to maintain a high degree of sensitivity. After



approximately twenty-minutes, the exercise concludes with reverting their postures to vertical. As they move upwards, they are asked to notice changes in the body and spatial shapes. Their slow, concentrated exploration of this task results in unusual body contortions and shifts in strength and balance. I believe the music compilation encourages their internalised focus and mental imagery. For the inversion exercise, the off-beat rhythms of Japanese double bassist, Saitoh Tetsu, whose compositions are enhanced with “noise-like sound” (Saitoh, 1992), a combination of gongs, cymbals and unidentifiable tones, is balanced with the soothing voice of Greek opera diva, Maria Callas, as well as the ethereal instrumental sounds of Iranian musicians, Niyaz. Overall, this first exercise is very different to their traditional dance vocabulary, and challenges them to find additional ways of moving. The process also prepares their minds to be flexible and open to other approaches that they may be unaccustomed to.

In the next stage, the activities are pointed at the uncertain and ever-changing characteristics of life. A basic English expression, ‘one step forward, 2 steps back’, is explored in two phases. In the beginning, they move through the task in a literal fashion. They fix their eyes on a goal and using spontaneous movement, a forward motion is followed by two actions backward. Next, they are made aware of significant indicators in their bodies. For example, the head could relate to thought processes, the heart to emotions and the pelvis to desires. With this in mind, they begin to make the steps relevant to their lives and initiate all of the moves with a specific intellectual, emotional, or sexual intention. The rock music of a French band reputed for their poetry, anger, and social protest lyrics, *Noir Desir* (translated as Black Desire), was used to stimulate them laterally. Further, I ask questions like, “How lofty is your desire?” or, “How base are your thoughts?” to add a sense of spatial dynamics to their process. At the same time, an awareness of the delicate nature of the work is emphasised. To this end, the loud, hard sounds of rock are tempered by French folk songs of French singers, Jacques Brel and Leo Ferré, as well as a classical piece of the Russian

composer, Sergei Rachmaninoff. This exercise provokes feelings of hesitancy and indecision, both crucial to Butoh philosophies.

Yoshito mentions that understanding complex principles, such as those relating to emptiness, as well as experimenting with different kinds of sight, like that of a bird or insect, are integral to the practice (Ohno Yoshito, Workshops, Tokyo, 2004, 2005, 2007, 2009, 2010). I set out to give the dancers an insight into these ideas. In agreement with the Japanese butohist, Ashikawa Yoko, who “taught that Butoh grows out of felt imagery” (Fraleigh, 1999, p. 142), I realise the need for specific tools to stimulate their imagination. To help them to embody a sense of calm that also contains additional qualities of surprise and mystery, I find the emblematic words of the Polish theatre director, Jerzy Grotowski, to be quite significant. With reference to Buddhist notions of emptiness, he talks about “the perfectly still, “empty” surface of the lake from which a fish suddenly leaps”(Jerzy Grotowski in Pavis, 1996, p. 240). In reference to their movement, I describe the pleasant emotions felt when looking at a picturesque lake where the quiet is interrupted by little jumping fish.

Other layered understandings of butoh are revealed in iconic Japanese pictures. In the session we look at *The Great Wave off Kanagawa*, a classic woodprint of the Edo Period, done by the Japanese artist, Hokusai Katsushika. I refer to Ohno’s interpretation of this picture, and describe how the wave was painted from the perspective of a fish. This leads to my asking, “How do you look? What kind of eye do you use?”. In answer, I relate the story of a personal friend, Gladys<sup>82</sup>, whose body was dying of cancer, yet, she remained alive because her eyes were focused on something unfathomable to most of us. I mention how she was able to see beyond the cancer and continue to live. With these thoughts in mind, the dancers are asked to see past the walls and other architectural limitations of the space, and simply walk.

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<sup>82</sup> Not her real name.

Fraleigh states that the “walking body” is at the root of Butoh” (Fraleigh, 1999, p. 177). I believe this way of walking has to be invested with a sense of delicacy. In imitation of geisha stories and exercises passed down by Ohno, I asked the dancers to walk with a tissue between their knees, in order to find a sensitivity and fineness in their action. Through visualisation, the walk soon extends beyond the literal dance studio into the larger notion of the universe. The dancers are able to remain connected to my esoteric thought pattern when I mention that everything in the universe is made up of the same elements, but with variations in the chemical compositions. I continue to state that by believing in our inter-connectedness, we could imagine the universe within ourselves. Consequently, we could reduce expressions that might require our whole body, and locate it to only one body part. Following this line of thought, they are able to expand and curtail their self-expression. At one moment they imagine themselves as shooting stars by running and cutting through the space. The next instant, they are dancing with their hands and ‘seeing’ (sic) the space with eyes between their fingers. Likewise, the music accompaniment travels from the mystical tones of *A ton Etoile* (translated as *To your Star*) by Noir Desir, to Rachmaninoff’s melancholic classical piano piece, *Rhapsody on a Theme of Paganini*.

They are able to move to the notion of “keeping the secret” (Ohno Yoshito, Workshops, Tokyo, 2004, 2005, 2007, 2009, 2010), a butoh philosophy that most Westerners find difficult to grasp, which contrary to the exhibitionist approach of ballet, asks the dancers to show restraint in their interpretation of this final exercise entitled, *The Wish*.

The action of this exercise develops in four stages and involves a walk to the wall and back into the space, followed by a run and a gradual movement to the floor. The intention behind the beginning walk across the room is to offer a wish into the universe. On arrival at the wall, they are asked to perceive everyone’s wishes and carry that back into the space. To interlink the previous exercises I remind them of the body of

water with the jumping fish. However, to maintain a sense of “potentialities” (Jerzy Grotowski in Pavis, 1996, p. 240), and not be satisfied with one particular interpretation, I refer to a documentary I had seen about, human-sized, man-eating fish and ask them to imagine that something incredulous could be hiding in their bodies. The third phase of the exercise links to the Western folkloric superstition of making a wish to a star. Here, the dancers are asked to feel an increase in body mass, by personifying a sense of swelling from the inside-out. This inevitably explodes and results in a shooting star, which they demonstrate in runs that cut through the space. The disappearance of a shooting star in the universe, concludes the workshop. In this exercise they are prompted to feel a release of weight in individual parts and use their body's eyes as they diminish to the floor.

The work on this second day intends to push them out of familiar territories and into an arena where they would have to invest their work with intuition and unknown elements. However, at the end of this session I make the following abstract notes that set the tone of the third workshop,

*They have to slow down and feel/see the magic...explore human consciousness and walk around the inside...I need to provoke a reaction...(jacki job, Reflection in diary, 2 April, 2014).*

### Workshop Three

This workshop is built around the theme, *Lessons from the Inanimate*, and to trigger their capacities at a sub-conscious level from the outset, we begin with a visualization-meditation exercise. A dream-like composition off the *Healing the Feeling* album of Cape-Town based sound-scapist, Garth Erasmus, penetrates the room. The dancers are seated in comfortable positions, and asked to imagine a flower resting on the floor between their legs. On the inhalation, they sniff the flower up to the pelvis and hold the breath, then inhale once more and pull it up to the

navel. This breath pattern continues as they pull the flower higher up the body, into the heart and finally, on top of the chest. At this point their exhalation creates a concave shape in the body that allows the flower to fall from the chest back down to the floor. This exercise gradually grows to their envisioning a flower with huge petals that brushes against the body on inhalation. With the exhalation, they push the flower away from the body, causing the inhalation to activate the entire body in the direction of the flower. In this manner they are able to connect to and activate their physical bodies through the subtle control of the breath. Understanding breath to be the cornerstone of life, the foundation is set for the succeeding exercises that use inanimate objects to create specific movement qualities.

The rest of the workshop relates the characteristics of tangible objects, such as cottonwool and stones, to ways of embodying experiences in life. They are all handed strips of cotton wool and instructed to slowly pull it and notice how much it stretches to single fibres before breaking. In the process, they are asked to remain aware of their body's behaviour and breath. To introduce the task, I remind them of my friend, Gladys, who never seemed to break her hold on life, even though she seemed to be hanging on a thread. The cotton wool thus becomes a metaphor for the combination of strength and fragility. Next, each dancer picks up a palm-size smooth, grey, stone and I ask, "If stones could speak, what stories would they tell?" They are asked to consider that stones, like the walls of the room may appear neutral but observed much. With this in mind, the stone corresponds to the idea of 'keeping the secret', so often mentioned by Yoshito as the crux of his father's stardom (Ohno Yoshito, Workshops, Tokyo, 2004, 2005, 2007, 2009, 2010).

In addition the dancers are asked to imagine the story of the stone. With various questions that range from probable to exaggerated situations, they are prompted to wonder why and how the stone got to be in their hands at that moment. In their embodiment they have to be conscious of four elements. The first feature relates to time, in terms of the duration

and speed of their action. This sensibility is linked to an awareness of the second element, namely, the stone's dimension. They have to be attentive to the size, as well as its inner and outer aspects. Thirdly, noticing the weight of the stone determines how they carry their bodies in this activity. Finally, they are challenged to restrict their physicality to individual body parts, such as the back or neck. This in turn makes them cognisant of the capacity of communication through relatively minute movements.

As before, the music is specifically selected to assist the dancers in balancing the cryptic nature of this task with an emotional and intellectual investment. The theatrical voice of Canadian voice-artist, Meredith Monk, echoes the abstract quality of the exercise. Moreover, I believe that on a phenomenological level, the following lyrics and repetitive rhythms of Erasmus further support their understanding and exploration of the work.

From fears, to move to tears. Stonebreakers. Our mothers are, stonebreakers. Our fathers are, heartache. It takes water, to make a leak. It takes tears, for a stone to break. The Milky Way was made. (Garth Erasmus, lyrics of Stonebreakers, 2004)

In addition to specific tunes, the musical dynamic of *forte-piano* is introduced in this session. I mention how, like music, the body could express a combination of force and gentleness. For the Japanese sensibility, this moment could be seen in a theatrical crouch, called *shagamu*. I continue to explain that squatting is typical to the Japanese culture and connected to their daily lives. The difference with *shagamu* as experienced in class, is that the dancers are required to maintain a vertical torso for as long as possible. Further, I mention how in traditional Japanese theatre, the act of *shagamu* at the end of an epic play intends to encapsulate the entire story in one slowly descending crouch. With this in mind, they have to slowly crouch and capture aspects of life derived from cotton wool and stones. At the midway point, they experience great difficulty in maintaining a smooth downward action. At this *forte-piano* moment, they are urged to really look inside and as opposed to just making a physical shape, realize that like in traditional

theatre, the act of *shagamu* is necessary in order for them to tell their story.

Next, to locate their story closer to a Western perception of daily life, simple actions of walking and drinking are chosen to convey the concept of life learnt from inanimate objects. When walking, the dancers are reminded to be aware of their eyes and mindful of the fact that the earth is constantly turning, thus their vision could shift, and they are not required to walk a straight line. Cindy comments on how the indirect dynamic helps her to lose a sense of pretense and instead, focus on a fixed idea. At this midway point in my research process, I find her observation interesting, as I use seemingly obscure methods to achieve specific emotions in my practice of *butoh*. The exercise relating to drinking is set up in a rather dramatic fashion, and continuing along the lines of observation techniques, the exercise emphasises the reciprocal relationship between the performer and the audience. The dancer is required to slowly reach out and pick up an espresso cup and saucer that are placed on a chair. They are split into two groups, and told to pay attention to both the active (participants) and passive (observers) ways of looking at each other. To drive the point home, I relate the story of Ohno's quintessential work, *Admiring La Argentina* (1977). In his early twenties, Ohno had seen a Spanish dancer, Antonia Mercé, at the Imperial Theatre in Tokyo. Some forty-seven years later, Ohno saw an abstract painting of the Japanese artist, Nakanishi Natsuyuki in a Tokyo gallery. For Ohno, that painting conjured up the long-suppressed image of Mercé, and impelled him to come out of retirement and perform again. When relating this account I particularly emphasise *how* Ohno must have watched Mercé in performance, so that more than forty years later she was still able to provoke a strong emotional memory that gave rise to his iconic status. Moreover, one could also consider how focused the performance of Mercé towards Ohno might have been, for him to have felt such a strong connection with her. In this way, the exercise turns into a kind of performance. Overall, the theme of sight is maintained, and

further psychological dynamics of hesitancy and restraint, elements already experienced in the previous workshops, are incorporated.

To conclude, the dancers are required to write down a description of their physical and mental experiences in this session. Three questions (see appendix) are answered to musical accompaniment. McFerrin's rendition of Bach's *Air from Orchestral Suite no. 3* backs the first question. Next, a Japanese track, *Kotoba ni dekinai* (translated as *Words are not possible*), by Oda Kazumasa, is played when they respond to the second question. The third question is supported by two pieces, Anthony and The Johnson's *Eyes Underneath Her Feet* and a short piano melody, *Butoh 101*, composed by a student<sup>83</sup> at Rhodes University. The music retains their responses within the remaining twenty minutes of this workshop, and also helps to maintain a relaxed atmosphere while they convey their thoughts.

These questions are repeated in various ways during the fourth and fifth workshops. At this third stage, however, their written answers corroborate and supply an additional dimension to my interpretation of their actions. For example, Cindy's experience of having "a calm, yet powerful sense of freedom within" supports my analysis of their activities. However, in spite of using words like 'surreal' and 'incredible' to describe their feelings, all of the dancers express their fear of the unfamiliar and of losing control in the session. On the other hand, they are divided in their comparison of butoh and ballet, with two dancers describing vast differences in movement and intention, and the other two expressing a belief in the underlying ideologies of both techniques to be the same. In the following analysis chapter, I will discuss how the dancers who initially desired homogeneity between the two dance styles shifted to an acknowledgement of the detailed difference in matters pertaining to the mind, body, spirit and self.

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<sup>83</sup> The student composed a four-minute piano piece after she had experienced her first butoh workshop, which I taught.



#### Workshop Four

On this day the activities revolving around the theme, *(An)other Body*, may have been pre-determined, but also appear to form as a consequence of their reactions to various exercises. For example, I associate their obvious fatigue at the beginning of the session to the heaviness felt in the body before dreaming, and state that it is crucial to their search for an above standard quality and purpose in movement. The intention behind the first exercise is not so much about limbering up, but relates to heeding to their weariness and finding the body's transformative potential through its specific articulations. Throughout the workshop, pointed questions are asked immediately after particular concepts are explored. I find it interesting how their responses correspond to exercises I had in mind for that day. Generally, this session allows the dancers to delve deeper into butoh philosophies that complicate Western aesthetics of beauty and form.

To illustrate, the prettiness of a flower is likened to the dancer's portrayal of the body in a way that is perceived as pleasing to the senses. However, it is pointed out that the flower's success is inevitably linked to the structure of its roots. The dancers are asked to explore their physical roots, and show the unseen by considering this aspect of the flower. As such, they visualise different shapes and trajectories of roots beneath the soil. By allowing themselves to become roots, they also examine ways of determining their form and use the body to the 'see' their path in the dark. The exercise expands to their becoming flowers. All of them note how the moment-to-moment thought process as roots leads to their questioning the kind of flower they would become. Their particular experience of 'not feeling beautiful' results in an organic approach into the following exercise.

"So what is beautiful?" I ask. Bearing in mind that beauty is relative and that life is transient, the dancers are asked to explore the answer to this question by considering what they might have thought of as non-

beautiful, that is, a physically impaired body. I relate a romantic story of a couple I came across in Germany in 1996, to ease them into my perspective. I tell them about the man, who in my opinion was handsome and the woman, who was severely paralysed, yet they seemed to be in love and full of desire for each other. I mention how fascinated I was at the time and how nothing in their interaction with each other felt pathetic or untoward. For me, the boyfriend saw beyond the obvious. I state, “We are not just our bodies”, and ask them to move an impaired body in the space. Following that, to the tune of *Non, je ne regret* (translated as *No, I don't regret*), by French folk singer, Edith Piaf, I ask, “How does this body talk about love?” Their feelings range from ‘embarrassment’ to ‘awkwardness’ and ‘ugliness’. I do not feel discouraged as their responses organically opens the door to the fourth activity.

By way of introduction, the dancers are reminded of the workshop's theme, *(An)other Body*, and hence, how the exercises are tools to aid in their search for non-conventional presentations of themselves. Another means to this end is suggested in exploring one's memory of a deceased loved one. I believe that by personifying a memory and dancing with it, the intention of the performer evolves to a dimension of the third person, allowing the body to manifest a different spirit. Hijikata and Ohno exemplified this transcendent approach in their teaching and work. For example, Hijikata's long hair personified his dead sister who had been sold as a geisha when she was two years old. He once stated, “When I sit, my sister stands up to dance” (Fraleigh & Nakamura, 2006). In a similar vein, Ohno wore women's dresses on stage in order to relive an intimacy with his mother (Ohno & Ohno, 2004, p. 79). At this point the dancers are asked to think of someone that had passed, literally place them somewhere on themselves, and dance with them. The intention of the exercise is not to grieve, but to express a quality of gratitude and say, ‘thank you’.

They practice *hokutai* (way of walking) and held a flower during the final exercise in order to re-establish a connection with something physical and daily life. However, their perspective of the flower was aligned to the Surrealist-Expressionist notions supported in *butoh* ideologies. Here, the dancers attention is drawn to reflecting on the colour and shape of the stem. Referring to the blend of blue and yellow that formed green, I explain how the Expressionists describe blue as representative of the darkness or underworld, and yellow to be symbolic of the light (Norris, 1996). This understanding allows them to see the flower, and by extension, themselves, as a conduit between the two worlds. Further, they are asked to emulate the straight line of the stem in their walk, whilst maintaining an awareness of the roots and petals, or in other words, the unseen and seen features of themselves.

The exhaustion felt at the beginning shifts into an energized, positive atmosphere by the end of this session. This supportive environment enables them to engage in a semi-structured impromptu discussion that reveals their thoughts on mindfulness as performers and internal exploration techniques in ballet. They liken their development for roles in classical ballets to the preparation processes of actors. However, with reference to the artistic director's vision, Dianna comments on the dilemma of balancing the submissiveness of the ballet dancers in executing the dance steps, with conveying an internal connection to the character in the movement. In the ensuing analysis I will discuss how levels of their obedience and ambition to please are noticed and challenged, and speculate on how their responses seem to indicate the transformative potential of *butoh*.

## Workshop Five

The main objectives of this final session are to reiterate butoh-esque angles of perception and consciousness of movement. The exercises are pointed at reviewing their individual qualities as dancers and also look at their role as performers. Once again, the flower is used as a poetic symbol of the oppositional forces contained in life-cycles. As such, this session is entitled, *Dance of the Flower*, and explores the concept of death and re-birth. In addition, they are tasked with a timeline exercise that aims to reconcile their experiences of the last few weeks with their everyday ballet practice.

The first exercise unfolds over 15-minutes to the strains of American cellist, Yo-Yo Ma's, *Sonata for Cello and Piano no. 1*. The dancers are required to walk around the room and use the body's eyes to look at themselves. As before, they are encouraged to be sensitive and aware of the various idiosyncracies of the eyes. Next, they are reminded of the inter-relationship between the audience and themselves, and asked to communicate something. At this second stage of the exercise they ask an imaginary audience, "Do you see what I see?". In other words, with various dynamics of movement they aim to convey something that could be *seen*, and in the broader sense of the word, perceived, understood or absorbed through the senses. I make them aware of their breathing and play with the tension between opposing actions of forward and backward, or rising and falling. Gradually the actions are brought to stillness by recalling the neutrality of the stone. Also, by visualising a body of water teeming with fish beneath its surface, they manifest this stillness without losing sensations of movement and awareness in their entire being.

Next, they use a tissue in one dance followed by a dance with a flower in another exercise, in order to remind them of the balance between delicateness and strength. I playfully mention how a tissue could clean a dirty nose, yet retain its sensitivity. Whilst holding on to the tissue, they

are asked to embody the same sensitivity and weightlessly float through the space. The subtle difference between imitating a buoyant feeling with a tissue in the hand, and allowing the body's spirit to become like tissue, is especially challenging. I mention a familiar scene in the Hollywood film, *American Beauty* (Mendes, 1999), as further inspiration, where, in my opinion, a plastic bag blowing in the wind becomes a metaphor for dance.

When dancing with the flower, their attention is drawn to concepts of life and death that butohists claim to be manifest in the flower. Imagining the flower as a metaphor of their own lives, they extend their research into exploring different ways of dying. I describe the magical end of the cherry blossom season in Japan, when for days, it appears to be snowing pink, red and white petals, and then suddenly, it disappears overnight. I also facetiously mention the flowers of a large retail chain in South Africa, Woolworths, that seem to hold on to their shape for the longest period, even when withered and dried out. I briefly comment on flowers that lose their petals gradually, and others that seem to vanish in an instant. In the exercise, they could think of the flower and express either one or a few forms of death. Aware of the interconnection between life and death, they are then asked to become animate after dying and transform into some kind of life. I give the example of the first flower that appears on a mountain after it has been devastated by fire. The indeterminacy of the exact time and location of that bloom is something that has to be embodied in the exercise. Speaking evocatively and reiterating principles conveyed thusfar, they are required to wait until they sense the moment and see what life they would become. At this stage the dancers largely shift from gazing at themselves in the mirror and begin to make a more internal study of their actions. In this regard, Ashley's trajectory and self-reflections are particularly interesting to analyse.

Needing to consolidate all of our work together, I ask the dancers to think of a timeline and show their experiences in terms of the past, present and future tenses. First of all, I play the Italian aria, *Dove sono I bei*

*mementi* (translated as *Where are all those beautiful moments*), from the Austrian composer Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart's opera, *Le Nozze di Figaro* (translated as *The Marriage of Figaro*), and require them to cast their bodies back to the first workshop. Observing sensitive, paired down movements, I ask, "How did you move before you entered this class that day?". Immediately, a more mechanical form becomes evident, upon which I ask them to return to their quality of movement of the present day. Moving on to the future, they are encouraged to really look at the details of their movements, feelings and sense of focus, and try to reconcile the different characteristics of the past and present in one dance. And returning to the oblique nature of *butoh*, this future reconciled notion of movement, is shown in a slow-moving *shagamu*. Suggestively, this final stage in the exercise is done to the French song, *Ne Me Quitte Pas* (translated, *Don't Leave Me*), by folk-singer, Jacques Brel.

To conclude this chapter, I would like, you, the reader to experience a moment of introspection and ask that you stand with your front body facing a wall, with your arms hanging down the sides of your body and your feet a comfortable distance apart. The basic movement is for you to slowly turn and end with your back body facing the wall. However, I would like you to shift with intention.

When you are in position, close your eyes, just for moment, and when you re-open them, become aware of your peripheral vision. Really gaze into your outer edges. Then slowly shift your feet and allow your body to move into your outer edges. If it is dark, wait, and allow your eyes to adjust. Try not to rush. Breath. Continue to look towards your peripheries whilst slowly moving your body into it. When your back body faces the wall, allow your eyes to slowly adjust to see what is in front of you.

In metaphorical terms, you shifted by looking into your blurred edges and followed what may have been difficult to define, and gradually, with appropriate adjustments, could see what was in front of you. In terms of the workshops, I wonder what the dancers felt and thought about as they

moved into the peripheral edges of butoh? What did they see ahead of them when the process came to its end? The following section is an analysis of their experiences.

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## **CHAPTER SIX**

### **DATA ANALYSIS AND FINDINGS**

To analyse these workshops I assume an anthropological position and used the multi-angled strategies and interdisciplinary techniques entailed in qualitative research methods. One description of qualitative research is that it “embraces tensions and contradictions” (Denzin & Lincoln, 2011, p. 6). These oppositional qualities are inherent to the theme of this dissertation. The workshops are analysed through the lens of butoh, Interculturalism, and Phenomenology.

And asks,

- How is butoh experienced by classical ballet dancers of Cape Town City Ballet company, in Cape Town in 2013?

In the workshop process, three additional questions were asked:

- Firstly, how do the ballet dancers describe their physical and mental experiences?
- Secondly, how do they describe the triggers of their responses?
- And thirdly, how are these experiences different from classical ballet?

The analysis is grammatically outlined in the past tense in order to indicate a sense of reflection and retrospection. Overall, the study is contained in the spirit of collaboration, where both the participants and myself have the possibility of learning something from the process. These findings may have larger application to the ways in which performance qualities are created and rehearsed by the Cape Town City Ballet company.



### The Participants

In terms of their background, training, age and mindsets, the participants mirror the general culture of others in their sphere. In other words, a few individuals of Cape Town City Ballet, could be seen as representative of other non-participatory company members. Commenting on the analysis of case studies, Danish economic geographer, Bent Flyvbjerg, states, “formal generalization [...] is considerably overrated as the main source of scientific progress” (Ibid., p. 305). I understand this to support how one’s use of narratives, or an interpretation of activities and behaviour, could have implications in a larger paradigm. For example, I note the overall sense of ease and familiarity amongst them, evident in their teasing each other at the beginning of the sessions. Similarities were also seen in their backgrounds, particularly in terms of their classical dance training. All of them had trained in South Africa and begun their training at primary school level. Typical to most male dancers, Ashley started his training at ten years of age, whereas the women model the relatively younger introductory training ages of most ballerinas. Dianna, Brenda and Cindy started at the ages of four, seven and eight respectively. As already mentioned, they also had similar ages at the time of the workshops. I believe it is appropriate to state the racial classifications and social class of the participants as one underlying force of this dissertation has been to discuss the often underexposed politics embedded in the institution of ballet. Ashley is Coloured and described his background as working class. All of the women are White, and one describes her upbringing as upper middle class, whilst two describe theirs as middle class. Here, the racial classification of the dancers also parallel the demographics of the company. Cape Town City Ballet is composed of thirty-two dancers, divided into sixteen females and sixteen males. Amongst the male dancers, two are Black and four are Coloured. All of the non White dancers in the company are from working class environments. Amongst the company’s female dancers, one is Coloured. Like the sample group, relatively few of the White females consider

themselves as upper middle class, most in the company have middle class backgrounds, and none are from working class families. With this in mind, I hold that the familiarity between the four participants, their ballet training, ages at the time of the workshops, race, and class, closely mirror significant details of Cape Town City Ballet company in Cape Town and perhaps the country as a whole in 2013.

### Research Tools

The consideration of a range of material is spurred on by Denzin who advocates that the “validity [of qualitative research] is a construct of the development of consensus” (Ibid., p. 114). I attempted to receive multiple perspectives through a range of research tools such as questionnaires, video material, interviews, performances and Butoh-based workshops. I asked different kinds of questions in order to ascertain their immediate notions and details of their experiences in each of the workshops. One type of question was structured and required each person to script their answers at the end of the workshop. Other questions were semi-structured. For example, I often probed them while they were doing various exercises in class and asked them to elaborate on their specific experiences of the exercise. In these instances, I pay particular attention to the way they describe their actions and note how it would sometimes contrast my observations of their movement. For example, there are occasions when my scrutiny of their body language or physical positions nullify their responses to the activity. For example, during the last workshop Ashley describes his stance as broad and strong and did not realise that his feet were pointing towards each other, which contrary to his perception of strength, made him look vulnerable. In another instance, Brenda began to close her eyes at the beginning of an exercise, which I interpreted as her way to concentrate. However, when I mentioned this to her at a later point, she became completely embarrassed and claimed to have been unaware of doing so.

In trying to understand the participants better, three questionnaires are given that extract their personal details, contexts, motivations for volunteering, as well as their expectations of and responses to the process. A ten to fifteen minute time frame was generally allocated and except for the first one, answers are scripted at the end of the workshop. The final question of the first questionnaire asked the dancers to describe their expectations from the workshops, as well as their reasons for participation. Amongst the reasons given for their participation, each of the dancers stated they wanted to improve their ballet technique. When one considers ballet's constant focus on achieving an excellent external form, their desire to better themselves may seem natural. However, each of them added more introspective thoughts and claimed a desire to learn and grow<sup>84</sup>, as further motivations for participation.

At the third and fifth workshops, the dancers give written answers to three questions that I verbally pose at the end of the session. In addition, the video camera, acted as a passive partner in the inquiry, and I note its positive and negative elements. On the one hand, it aided the documentation of events by enabling me to be fully concentrated in the actions on hand. I notice that they had no inhibitions in front of the camera, and point this to their being used to the audience gaze in performance. To my mind, this led to their experiencing the workshops in an untroubled fashion, without perceiving any sense of judgement from external forces. During the transcription of the video material, several occurrences of their relaxed behaviour as well as their occasional forgetting about the camera is highlighted. For example, I realised their commenting or giggling amongst themselves when I turned

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<sup>84</sup> I have noted how one could see their desire to grow reflected in several similarly-aged individuals, known as “born-frees” (the name given to the generation of youth born after Nelson Mandela’s inauguration as South Africa’s first Black president in 1994), who are living in a democratic South Africa that, unlike the former apartheid system, seems to offer opportunities for the development of alternative and arguably, positive perceptions of oneself. In other words, they may not perceive limitations on themselves due to race. However, and as previously mentioned, this does not erase the imperialist attitudes reflected by the White population during the previous apartheid dispensation that are still evident in several sectors of the country.

my back to them, which to me, demonstrates a particular display of respect of the teacher that I believe to be portrayed in most ballet classes. On the other hand, I was unable to capture everything on video. Due to the dimensions of the studio, I needed to physically handle the camera in order for it record the entire scene. Without my hand-held manipulation, the camera was only able to capture activities in line with its lens. There were instances when I got absorbed in the action and failed to readjust or focus the lens on a specific activity. However, this was compensated by constant audio footage that still enabled my rendition of the events.

The location of the workshops and the architecture of the space play important parts in the analysis of material. The fact that the dancers were in their company studio, meant they were in a familiar space and this, I believe, heightened the study of how a ballet body experiences butoh, which could be seen to be outside their comfort zone. Butoh is a primarily introspective practice and works without or facing away from mirrors. In the dance studios of Cape Town City Ballet, a non-mirror approach was not always possible. One reason hinges on the architecture of the space. On entering the studio, mirrors that measure thirteen metres in length and stretches across the entire front of the dance studio are unavoidable. The studio's sound equipment, as well as electrical plug points are also located along this area. Because the company's audio system is locked up at the end of formal working day, I was obliged to bring along my own audio-visual equipment that included a laptop computer, speakers and video camera. The location of the plug points inevitably dictated the positioning of my audio-visual set-up. I placed myself within close access to the equipment in order to maintain control of the music and the camera. My stance automatically left the mirrors as their "natural" (sic) front and perpetuated the spatial conventions of the dancers. For example, I note how they often seem to unconsciously revert to the "chameleon effect" (Koch Sabine C. et al., 2012, p. 142) and adopt the same leg or head pose, look in the same

direction, stand in a particular order in relation to each other, or begin their improvisation exercises with a similar movement.

Further issues related to the space are due to the studio's partially-private-partially-public architectural design. Running at a right-angle to the mirrors along the front, full-length glass windows extend for about 10 metres across the breadth of the studio. This design permits the gaze of passers-by and creates occasional lapses in their concentration. For example, on the occasion of the third workshop, the participants seemed distracted by some company dancers who were moving around outside the studio, and/or sitting on chairs to observe the workshop's activities from beyond the glass wall. During the fifth and final workshop there were two interruptions; one dancer entered the studio to retrieve a forgotten item of clothing, and another came in to ask everyone to remove their socks as it allegedly made the floor slippery. I find that the dancers were not as disturbed by the intrusions on the fifth day, as they were on the first and attribute the difference in their concentration to their being in a state of flow, as coined by the Hungarian psychologist, Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi (2002). In other words, they were so "involved in an activity that nothing else seems to matter" (Csikszentmihalyi, 2002, p. 4). I also believe that by the end of the fifth workshop, the dancers had a broader insight to the embodying aspects of butoh. They had made shifts in their opinions of themselves as well as their performance processes. These shifts were not overtly dramatic but noted nonetheless and will be expanded upon in detail below.

### Data Analysis

In gathering all the information I set out to look at all of the material, as if for the first time, without any pre-determined outcomes. I could not guarantee that the workshops would stimulate alternative ways of how ballet dancers structured movement. I was also uncertain whether the various tasks would provoke emotional responses. In reviewing the data, several aspects, such as an analysis of similar and different patterns of

behaviour in terms of gender, mirror fixation or ballet hierarchy<sup>85</sup> were observed but will be reserved for future writing. However, on scrutiny, a heightened use of the imagination was seen as one of the most important findings. This deduction is based on the dancers' description of how their creative thoughts influenced their execution of movements in different ways. For example, the use of imagination resulted in extended limbs and upright postures usually associated with ballet, replaced with more asymmetrical, distorted shapes and floor-based work. In order to help the dancers grasp the concepts of *butoh* and embody alternative and authentic ways of moving, I used a number of metaphors in the workshops. According to scholars, Ilka Konopatsch and Helen Payne (2012), metaphors are rooted in physical experiences (Koch Sabine C. et al., 2012). I believe that metaphors are able to assist one in realising ideas that may not seem realistic on a physical level alone. For me, metaphors stimulate the imagination, which I understand as an inner process that enables the mind to create visual images of the self and/or surrounding world in deeply personal and individual terms. This ties in with Butler's description of "fantasy [as] what allows us to imagine ourselves and others otherwise; it establishes the possible in excess of the real; it points elsewhere, and when it is embodied, it brings the elsewhere home" (Butler, 2004, p 29). I have appropriated Butler's notion of fantasy to articulate how the use of metaphors allowed the dancers to imagine themselves differently. As such, I analysed imagination and its effect on the ballet dancers. I contend this to be relevant to this dissertation's argument for shifting the performance processes of ballet dancers in South Africa.

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<sup>85</sup> In conventional ballet companies, dancers have different hierarchical statuses related to their technical ability and experience within performances. Dancers who are given solo or principal roles in performances are ranked the highest in the company. In this focus group, two dancers were ranked as artists, the lowest level, and two were senior artists, a much, although not the highest, rank.

To overview all the information, I created two tables, entitled,

**Searching for Evidence of Imagination**

**Table A: Gendered Responses**

<b>Time/Gender</b>	<b>A. Male</b>	<b>B. Female</b>
Before	a) Male response	b) Female response
During	a) Male response	b) Female response
After	a) Male response	b) Female response

**Table B: Individual vs Group Responses**

<b>Time/ Individual or Group</b>	<b>What I learnt from singular experiences</b>	<b>What I learnt from shared experiences</b>
Before	1) Ashley 2) Brenda 3) Cindy 4) Dianna	Group
During	1) Ashley 2) Brenda 3) Cindy 4) Dianna	Group
After	1) Ashley 2) Brenda 3) Cindy 4) Dianna	Group

Table A indicates gendered male and female responses in relation to the periods before, during and after the workshops. Table B looks at the reactions of the individuals as well as the group. In terms of the individual reactions, physical, verbal and written responses have been examined. With regard to the group, I looked at incidences where aspects of imagination were uniformly experienced by each of the four participants, and disregarded occasions when two or three dancers might have reacted in a similar fashion. In relation to the chronology; 'before' refers to the period prior to the first date of the workshop process and therefore includes references recorded in my memory. The 'during' category refers to their actual experiences in the Cape Town City Ballet studio on the 26, 27 March and 2, 5, 9 April 2013. And 'after' refers to each dancer's reflection two months after the workshops period, as related in one-on-one interviews at various locations in Cape Town. The length of this interim period was prescribed by their rehearsal and performance obligations in the months of April to May 2013. To follow a clear structure, the sequence of the data analysis correlates to the table above.

#### Table A. Gendered Responses

I agree with Butler's theory (1990) that gender is a performative act, and that in spite of gendered genitalia, males and females have several corresponding points in their behaviour. I am aware of how educational, religious, social and political components of society reinforce gender stereotypes. Females and males are often looked at in binary comparison to each other. For example, femininity may be described as being soft-spoken, submissive, physically weak, utilising less material space and concerned with introspection. Masculinity, on the other hand, may describe being brusque, in charge, physically strong, inhabiting a wide physical space and more prone to extrovert acts. These stereotypes are echoed in several classical ballet stories. For example, in the ballet, *Giselle*, the female protagonist is beautiful, but also portrayed as a peasant, physically weak and mentally ill. She is unable to



cope with the deceit of the man she is in love with, becomes mad and eventually dies. Her male counterpart is handsome and from nobility. In spite of his deceit, which was directly responsible for her death<sup>86</sup>, his expression of regret and sorrow makes her forgive him in the afterlife. Therefore, assuaged of all guilt, he is able to carry on with his life. Another ballet, *Coppélia*, portrays the female as a beautiful but inanimate mannequin that can only be 'brought to life' (sic) by the hand of her maker, a male, Dr Copellius. I believe these gendered significations implied through performance could shift if the performers perceived themselves differently.

Butler (1990, 2004) claims that social conditioning is imposed after one's birth that shapes a feminine or masculine approach to life. Subversions of the convention are often attributed to homosexual preferences, resulting in further stereotypes and prejudices. For example, describing a homosexual woman or lesbian, as butch, or a homosexual man or gay, as camp or effeminate. I believe that traditionally, many of the roles played in ballet, as well as the construction of exercises in class, reinforce gender stereotypes. For example, the strength of the man and fragility of the woman is emphasized through specific costuming and choreography of movements. In the workshops I looked at occasions where the responses of the one male and three females in the group may have indicated if their dance training has or has not embedded a certain kind of physicality or emotional reaction in their response to butoh. I was also interested in checking how their responses subverted what society and ballet perceives as conventional gender related reactions. I found that each of the dancers reactions could be interpreted

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<sup>86</sup> I found a contemporary parallel to the story of *Giselle* in the trial against South African para-olympian champion, Oscar Pistorius, for fatally shooting his girlfriend, a lesser known South African reality TV show celebrity and model, Reeva Steenkamp, in February 2013. Due to the international status of the accused, the trial received live global coverage on television. Pistorius was initially arrested and charged with murder, but after a lengthy and often emotionally theatrical trial process, he was found guilty of a lesser charge, culpable homicide, in October 2014. It is not my intention to dispute the lawful judgement of the court. For me, however, this trial echoes one underlying message of *Giselle* – where a man's expression of regret under the premise of love may be enough for him 'to get away with murder'.

as both conventionally and unconventionally masculine and feminine. When the one male applied his imagination to the exercise, I noted how his physical and verbal responses increasingly destabilized his masculine image. Butoh describes the qualities of delicateness and lightness as feminine. According to Yoshito, males can best express the delicate feminine qualities as they have investigated it more (Ohno Yoshito, Workshops, Tokyo, 2004, 2005, 2007, 2009, 2011). I find this perspective to be chauvinistic and noted how the three females had different patterns of subverting or identifying with female stereotypes. This dissertation is enveloped in a larger framework of dance and performance studies and therefore does not allow me to delve into the subject of gender at length. However, in terms of performance, I do find connection with how Butler explains gendered acts and it is with this particular focus in mind that I will analyse the dancers.

#### a) Male Responses

##### 1.1 Before the Workshops

I did not find any significant acts at this point, however, their passive listening to my proposal of butoh workshops could be interpreted as feminine.

##### 1.2 During the Workshops

In what could be described as following a male stereotype, Ashley expressed his initial discomfort in the workshop without any embarrassment. He preferred to deal with his sense of awkwardness by not fully engaging with the exercises and appeared to be disinterested. When participating, he showed off muscular strength in the execution of the exercises. For example, when he walked, he kicked out his legs with firm, flexed feet and stamped his feet into the floor, with his arms remaining at the sides of his body. A quality of insensitivity that one might associate with soldiers and masculinity could be seen in this

action, especially as the exercise focused on a kind of sensitivity by imagining eyes underneath the feet. Further, I interpreted the female dancers increasingly autonomous behaviour and movements over the workshop period as masculine and a subversion of the feminine stereotype. With regard to my role, I believe that the dancers perceived me to be in the position of their teacher, which in reference to the autocracy often demonstrated by choreographers and teachers of ballet, could be understood as imposing, aggressive, or masculine.

### 1.3 After the Workshops

It may be noted that each of the female dancers portrayed an image of independence, a trait usually associated with men and seen as masculine, by driving their own car. However, this was not the case with the male dancer.

Their independence could be interpreted as subverting the image of ballerinas who are reliant on the strength of the male dancer, as demonstrated in the numerous lifts in performance.

### b) Female Responses

#### 2.1 Before the Workshops

As all of the dancers had no idea of what *butoh* was, they appeared to be apprehensive and this emotion could be seen as a feminine stereotype.

#### 2.2 During the Workshops

In terms of the dancers relationship with the mirror, I often saw all of them adjusting their clothing and checking balletic positions, such as the *tondue*, in the first three workshops. Should one associate acts of grooming and an overt consciousness of the external form as feminine qualities, Ashley's behaviour and his notable attention to the mirror could be described as a subversion of a masculine stereotype, and feminine.

Other occasions when he expressed actions associated with femininity was when he became more introspective and even light in his actions. At one moment he gently fluttered his fingers above his shoulders like wings. I mentioned above how my observation of his body did not always match his perception of himself. In this regard I found it interesting that butohists often incorporate ambiguous and ambivalent meaning by juxtaposing contrasts in dance.

A sense of passive obedience, that could be described feminine, was evident when the dancers all seemed to follow and imitate each other's movements in the first two workshops. It seems to me that the mental conditioning of *corps de ballet* may give rise to loss of self, which I suggest becomes ingrained, more especially so when one has been doing this to one's body for over fifteen years. The body is thus encased in this particular way of doing, and one is no longer oneself but this entity called a ballet dancer who readily and regularly gives one's self over to the demands of the ballet choreographer or teacher. However, I note how this sense of conformity and compliance to authority has contributed to the perpetuation of ballet across centuries and continents.

### 2.3 After the Workshops

Bearing in mind the masculine role of the lifter or carrier in ballets, and notwithstanding socio-economic dynamics, I believe Ashley's dependence on his friends and/or the public transport system to move him from one space to the next, could be interpreted as feminine.

### Analysis

One aim of butohists is to develop their own sense of Butoh and not follow a prescribed movement pattern. Yoshito constantly asks, "What is your Butoh?" (Ohno Yoshito, Workshops, Tokyo, 2004, 2005, 2007, 2009, 2010). In other words, it is important to examine the origin and route of one's movement, and then develop a personal signature that

does not necessarily subscribe to an anatomically gendered stereotype. Most Japanese men in performance are also comfortable with cross-dressing and do not see this as a sign of homosexuality<sup>87</sup>. It is notable, however, that the same does not apply to Japanese women who tend to emphasize stereotypical feminine dress, like high-heeled shoes and two-piece dress suits. Another intention is to de-sexualise the body in *butoh* performances, even though they appear to be largely naked. For example, Iwana (discussed in Chapter Three) tucks away his penis to render himself neutral or neutered and female *butoh*ists could be covered in white make-up and have shaven heads, to present an asexual self. One of the objectives of this workshop is to discover alternate ways of the dancer's body in performance. For me, the transition between gendered responses from each of the dancers give evidence of how *butoh* affects and breaks down stereotypical representations of gender, without having to strip naked or pull strange faces, which could be considered as *butoh* conventions. Both male and female dancers in the workshop demonstrated an 'other gendered' sense of their bodies when utilising their imagination and allowing it to inform the language of their movement. These dancers performed in ways that did not adhere to the conventions of ballet or its expression of gender roles. I hold that *butoh* may be a valuable tool for ballet in South Africa to develop works that shift the way we perceive each other in society.

#### Table B. Individual / Group Responses

With the term individual, I am referring to moments when a specific characteristic or quality was expressed by a single person, whereas the term group would indicate elements of perception or performance that were uniform to all of the dancers. In a few parts I have inserted direct

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<sup>87</sup> At kindergartens in Japan, cross-dressing games are often played in the classroom and it is not unusual for boys to imitate their female caregivers or teachers (usually female) by wearing dresses. This is not interpreted as a sign of homosexuality as it might be in the West, but part of everyday play. In addition, Japanese men and women alike wear a traditional dress, called *kimono*.

speech and noted how emotions, like embarrassment or confidence, were reflected in their body language and inflections in their voice. In addition, I have not adjusted the grammar, autograph and general sentence construction of the original delivery to suit the conventional academic style. This is a deliberate choice to give the reader a more personal association with the dancers, to hear their accents<sup>88</sup> as it were, as well as to maintain the authenticity and energy of the conversation (Holstein & Gubrium, 1995).

A look at each individual's progression and reaction to exercises and questions during the five workshops highlighted the individual nature of butoh. Each dancer had occasion to become more introspective with particular exercises. At such moments, their movements appeared to stem directly from their imagination and were quite unlike their usual patterns. My finding their movements unique was corroborated by statements such as, "I imagined I was a lily" (Ashley Adams, Verbal response, Cape Town, 2 April, 2013), or "I felt like an octopus" (Brenda Black, Verbal response, Cape Town, 29 March, 2013). However, the dancers would sometimes have almost identical responses. In this regard, I have found the theories of cultural habitus as expounded by the French sociologist, Pierre Bourdieu (1986), enlightening. Bourdieu theorised that embodied thoughts and practices are unconsciously acquired through social conditioning and is resistant to change. In relation to the ballet dancers, I noticed elements of identical embodiment in their posture as well as in their everyday movements, such as sitting, standing and walking. However, in the article, *Communities of Practice and Habitus* (2003), the British scholar, Alistair Mutch, criticised Bourdieu's fatalistic notion of change and argued that issues with change has to happen at an individual level (Mutch, 2003). I found Mutch's critique encouraging and was therefore open to discover how butoh's stimulation of the imagination could effect the individual experiences of

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<sup>88</sup> Not all of the dancers spoke English as a first language.

the ballet dancers in the actual workshops and relate to their performance processes beyond the workshops.

### What I learnt from Singular Experiences

#### 1. Ashley

##### 1.1 Before the Workshops

I had never met Ashley before the workshops and our first meeting revealed my personal misconceptions about gender. When Ashley sent a message to my telephone indicating his interest in participating in the workshop, I assumed he was a girl because of his name, as well as the fact that the other participants were female. This is ironic because I consider myself to be an open-minded person and would like to think that I do not base my knowledge on assumptions or stereotypes. Fixing a gendered image from a mere name demonstrated a lack of imagination on my part and highlighted how narratives around gendered stereotypes in society had informed my mental responses. Further, I found it ironic that as a male person, Ashley could be described as stereotypically male as he is tall, muscular and well proportioned.

##### 1.2 During the Workshops

I initially assumed that Ashley was not enjoying the sessions at all as relative to the other dancers, his attention was the most difficult to grasp. He became more responsive and seemed less distracted by the goings on outside of the studio halfway through the third workshop. At that time he also appeared to be less concerned with his external image and stopped looking at himself in the mirror before, during and after the various exercises in the workshop. On the questionnaire given on the third day, he admitted to feeling scared as the movements were unusual for him, and unlike any he had previously experienced. For example, I

required the body to distort itself by asking the dancers to pull up their shoulders which in terms of ballet, may hardly ever be required and may in fact, be seen as incorrect. When he started the warm-up of the fourth workshop by closing his eyes, I interpreted it as his determination to ignore distractions and turn his gaze inward. With this newfound concentration, he was able to forget about making ballet shapes, like rounded arms and extended legs, and used his imagination to create more abstract movements. He imagined himself with wings on his shoulders, rolled on the floor, and stood with his feet turned inwards, as if deliberately attempting to move in a fashion seldom associated with ballet. In response to my question on why Ohno dressed up as a girl when he danced, Ashley stated that certain men believed themselves to be women. I was immediately aware of my inner reflex that he may have been referring to himself in the third person, and experienced anxiety around my lack of expertise in exploring this complex psychological subject of gendered ambiguity. At the end of the fifth workshop he commented how vastly different butoh was to ballet and mentioned how he attained a higher sense of awareness in his movements. He wrote,

Buto (his spelling) is different from my everyday experience in the studio. [...] When doing buto we are trying to mimic different things and explore *all* (italics mine) of it, where in ballet we would focus mainly on the beauty of the subject we are mimicking. (Ashley Adams, Written response, Cape Town, 9 April, 2013)

### 1.3 After the Workshops

Four weeks after the last workshop session, we met at a coffee shop and immediately delved into a conversation regarding the artistic sense of a dancer. When questioned on his understanding of the term 'artist' he answered that a dance artist has the ability to "transport you into another world and make you believe" (Ashley Adams, Interview, Cape Town, 14 June, 2013). For this to be possible, it seems to me that a dancer would need to be skilled in a lot more than just the actual steps or physical movement. They would need to "appeal to the emotions of [the] audience" (Jane Allyn, 1984, p. 18) which from my point of view, requires



an understanding of the metaphysical potential of performance (Merleau-Ponty, 1964) as well as a knowledge of one's individuality, irrespective of physical talent.

In the weeks following our last workshop, Ashley had performed a principal role in the ballet, *Camille*. He claimed that he was able to carry the lessons learnt over the five sessions into his rehearsal process as well as his stage performance. The workshops had helped him to change his reliance on the mirror as the judge of his technique, especially if a movement felt awkward. As there are no actual mirrors to check oneself in performance, he claimed that his confidence in building his character with his imagination grew. He stated,

At first, because in my mind when I was feeling awkward I just didn't want to do it, but now it's actually quite a relaxed feeling to just go on and do something [...] It's that liberated feeling. (Ashley Adams, Interview, Cape Town, 14 June, 2013)

I found it interesting to consider how in performance, one may see the audience as the metaphor of a mirror. For example, they seem to have the ability to physically reflect a judgment through applause. The audience could also be seen as having a subliminal capacity to 'control' the dancer's movements. With this I mean that during performance, dancers may seem to adjust to the audience's command by for example, jumping higher or smiling broader. According to Ashley, butoh taught him, "To see what you want to see instead of what is in front of you" (Ibid.). This gave him the power to mentally transform his fellow dancers as well as himself into characters that would best suit his role. He was able to deliver a more believable performance, and in the case of *Camille*, able to "really fall in love [and be a] cocky, confident, sexy man" (Ibid.). He also claimed to have understood the fear that he experienced in the first few workshops and subsequently, had the ability to overcome movements that he was uncomfortable with, either technically or artistically, by committing to the instruction. During our conversation, he

ate<sup>89</sup> a large piece of cheesecake with relish. This was largely different to my post-workshop experiences with the female dancers.

## 2) Brenda

### 2.1 Before the Workshops

I saw her perform in *Giselle*, at a theatre in Cape Town, called the Masque Theatre, in February 2013. She danced in the *corps de ballet* that in conventional ballet companies, has all of the ballerinas looking as identical as possible. This uniform picture could easily make one lose sight of the individual dancer. However, I remembered Brenda's supple back, as she was able to curve into a backbend that was much deeper than the other ballerinas on stage. I wondered whether she was unaware of this difference, and if pointed out, whether she would adjust to blend in with the rest? It might be interesting to investigate whether ballerinas in the *corps de ballet* hold themselves back or extend further in order to be identical. Brenda reverted to anonymity in the role of one of Giselle's friends as all of the ballerinas were equally pretty, White, and smiling, and I have no recall of one in particular. I noted how my initial response to Brenda was based on external features and not emotionally related to her performance. From an audience perspective, I would like to investigate the visceral connection made, if any, by a ballerina or ballerinas in the *corps de Ballet*, and wonder how their uniformity and visual imagery impact on a multicultural society. However, these deliberations are best reserved to future writing.

### 2.2 During the Workshops

In the beginning of the workshop process, I perceived her as a leader and mistakenly believed that she took the initiative on various exercises

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<sup>89</sup> A future study on eating habits of dancers related to gender might be an interesting area to investigate.

and began to move before the other dancers. On reviewing the video footage, I found that she took the lead in asking questions in the first two workshops and realised that her confidence in speaking up might have resulted in my initial opinion. Similar to Ashley, Brenda seemed to be very reliant on her mirror image. After commencing an exercise, she would only turn away from the mirror once she was satisfied with her external shape. According to former PACT ballerina, Jane Allyn, "It does not help dancers to watch themselves in a mirror, for as soon as they concentrate on their own image they lose the feeling of the movement; so they rely on the choreographer for a mirror image in criticism and advice" (Jane Allyn, 1984, p. 79). As a ballerina, I believe that Brenda constantly strove for perfection in her movement and her questions may have been one of her ways to ensure precision. As my instructions required her to approach movement in a way that was unusual for her, she relied on the mirror as well as my clarity to feel assured of her actions. However, Brenda gradually allowed her body to be lead by the power of her thoughts and as the lesson progressed, she would increasingly turn her gaze inward. At the end of the third workshop she noted how butoh's imagining of eyes all over the body could assist her in ballet. For example, in reference to performance she noted, "If someone calls you, to first react in the back and not just turn the head and run" (Brenda Black, Written response, Cape Town, 2 April, 2013). By the start of the fourth workshop, she did the entire warm-up with closed eyes, as if she had consciously decided to avoid looking in the mirror. This session also marked a significant moment for her as she physically and emotionally transitioned from fatigue to elation. Noting her exhaustion at the beginning of the workshop, I reacted in an uplifting manner and on reflection, realised how, like the music, my statements aimed at manipulating particular responses. In this instance, I encouraged the dancers to enjoy the heaviness in their bodies and related this feeling to how my five-year old daughter described her tiredness. She said, "I don't want to close my eyes but my body makes me close my eyes and that's why I fall asleep". "And then", I added, "You dream, so allow yourself to dream so that something else can happen to your bodies" (jacki job,

Workshop, Cape Town, 5 April, 2013). On this day the dancers were required to express the emotion of love whilst moving with a distorted, disabled body. At the end of this workshop she claimed, "When I walked in here I felt almost drained [...] and now I feel exactly the opposite. It feels like I've got life in me, and there's energy inside of me". And, smiling broadly with her hands on her hips she adds, "I kind of feel in love now" (Brenda Black, Verbal response, Cape Town, 5 April, 2013).

As a dance scholar I noticed how the shift in her physical state was motivated from the inside. She claimed to *feel* a sense of life and energy *inside* of her that could best be explained in the emotion of love. In my opinion, Brenda's experience demonstrated how the embodiment of imagination could shift thoughts and emotions. Her first images of *butoh* (seen on the internet), conveyed physically distorted, strange bodies that might be perceived as negative. I was reminded of the French philosopher, Jean-Paul Sartre, who spoke of "imagination [...] as *perception renaissante* [perception renaissance]" (Sokolowski, 2000, p. 220), and for me, Brenda's elation felt at the end of the session could be seen as a kind of reawakening. In her own words, "It felt like it was a new day" (Brenda Black, Interview, Cape Town, 17 June, 2013).

Brenda also shifted in her feelings about the commonalities between ballet and *butoh*. At the end of the third session she maintained that very little difference existed between the two styles. I believe that she may have felt a need to defend the perceived command of ballet in Dance and was restricted by the "habitus" of her profession (Bourdieu, 1986). By the end of the fifth workshop she admitted to the difference of atmosphere and intention between the two genres. She wrote, "Normally in this studio it's lots of people and point shoes klanking and bashing and loud music.[...] But in your class it gives us time to go to that quiet place [...] Not to think of choreography but to just feel and go to that place where your mind/spirit/body or whatever takes you" (Brenda Black, Written response, Cape Town, 2 April, 2013). I believe that Brenda's overall experience could be described as her attaining a deeper

awareness of her body, and consequently, of life. For me, this corresponds to Merleau-Ponty's description of "the body as '*la cachette de la vie*' (the place where life hides away)" (Shusterman, 2005, p. 171).

### 3.3 After the Workshops

In responding to the question of whether the butoh sessions had influenced her performance processes or not, Brenda remained equivocal in attributing full credit to butoh for the positive shifts in her mood during the preparation for *Camille*. Instead of following her usual pattern of playing loud music and joking in the dressing room, she claimed to be quiet and more importantly, what I have interpreted as, her not being fearful of the quiet. She explained, "Usually, [...] I need to just keep going because if I have too much time to think I'll stress or I'll, you know. Where maybe I could control that a little more this time" (Brenda Black, Interview, Cape Town, 17 June, 2013). However, she insisted on not knowing the real source of this difference. In the process of my analysis, I found it interesting how one of Brenda's responses to butoh seemed to bear relation to volume. On further discussion she commented on how her consciousness would shift from an external focus at the beginning of each workshop, to a more internal awareness at the end. Above, I pointed out how I had interpreted her closed eyes in the fourth and fifth workshop as her development towards introspection. \ She also commented on her different relationship with the mirror and said, "You want to correct yourself, and oh ok this is wrong and this must be there, there, there. But with butoh it's more what you feel" (Ibid.). In answer to my question whether butoh may be complimentary to ballet, she claimed that considering their tight work schedules, it might be if it were scheduled during the company's working hours. As before, she seemed hesitant to strongly recommend the inclusion of butoh per se. In terms of shifting ballet out of its routine, she claimed, "It's good to do different things [...] To introduce the body to something new, and, cause it all adds and it all helps" (Ibid.).

### 3) Cindy

#### 3.1 Before the Workshops

Prior to the workshop period I had seen Cape Town City Ballet perform the ballets, *Coppelia* and *Giselle*, yet had no recollection of her in the *corps de ballet*. Much could be said about the stifling of individuality in the *corps de ballet*. With regard to its etymology, I find it interesting how the term has a military reference, as seen in the discipline and uniformity of the group.

I remained open to see whether Cindy would emanate a sense of singularity or not.

#### 3.2 During the Workshops

From the first workshop, her ability to adapt to butoh's alternate approach and its particular non-balletic way of the body was immediately apparent. I noticed how the speed of her movements decreased when she imagined eyes on her back and under her feet. At these moments, I interpreted her movements as sensitive and concentrated. It seemed as if she were really looking to find something. She was also able to work in seeming opposition to the conventions of ballet in the way she distorted her torso, which is usually held upright in ballet, and instead of dancing with straightened legs, she often held her knees in a bent position. I found it intriguing that her body distortions seemed to resemble butoh. On the one hand, I interpreted this similarity as a consequence of her deliberate intention to dance in a non-balletic way. On the other hand, with viewing the video recordings of myself, I thought that she might have been imitating my movements. For example, I often assumed, what could be considered a butoh-esque physicality whilst facilitating an exercise. I would be comparing the quality of delicateness to the feeling of holding a sheet of paper between one's knees and simultaneously move with flat feet, bent knees and light, floating arms. These moments could be described as a demonstration, and although they were brief,

might have subliminally stimulated a butoh-like quality in Cindy. When I questioned her about what she was feeling in a specific movement, she was often unable to articulate herself. She would laugh in embarrassment and claim, “I was just feeling” (Cindy Caesar, Verbal response, Cape Town, 2 April, 2013), and her voice would trail off. However, her written comments in the questionnaire given at the end of the third workshop expressed her thoughts well. She noted, “Just a few minutes dedicated to cotton wool can cross boundaries in the imagination and the mind to make worlds of its own. I understand more than I think” (Ibid.) When asked about the difference between ballet and butoh, she insisted that there should be none, as in her opinion, both ultimately strived to render some kind of truth in performance. She explained,

The emotion, expression, communication, dialogue is always there, always real, if one allows it [...] One needs to commit. You need to say something. And it doesn't have to be life-changing or deep all the time. But it must be real. Ballet should inevitably be one in the same as what we did today. Authentic. (Ibid.)

Cindy mentioned how the visual imagery produced from metaphors could be used to give credence to characters played in ballet performances. She imagined that if one could really embody another person or thing, the performance would be credible, even if it were not understood. She said, “Put layers into the character and you can appreciate something you don't understand” (Ibid., 5 April, 2013). It may be important to note that her comments were based on her experience of butoh, and with this in mind, I became optimistic of ballet's potential development with the incorporation of butoh techniques.

### 3.3 After the Workshops

In response to butoh's influence in the two-month period following our last workshop, Cindy's initial response was similar to Brenda's in the sense that she had found no categorical clear connection. However, she did claim to have developed a different awareness of movements that she may have previously dismissed as unimportant. She claimed that

butoh taught her about the detail within a movement, and in this sense, it polished her dance. She also enjoyed how butoh inverted her perception of her body and claimed, “What I really took away from it was the internal feeling of things. Trying to like, you can have your back as your front and your front as your back, to be able to feel things in that way” (Cindy Caesar, Interview, Cape Town, 13 June, 2013). She spoke about how cultivating a unique sense of self was important in one’s development as an artist, but then left the thought unfinished as if she were suddenly aware of revealing a private thought. In writing this section, I wondered whether she was vacillating between the anonymity of the *corps de ballet* as opposed to an acknowledgement of her identity when playing larger roles such as solos or duets. When discussing the ongoing practice of butoh, she readily responded that its lessons could be forgotten as quickly as they were taught, unless efforts were made to maintain a consistent practice. In spite of the time limitation, she acknowledged that their bodies seemed to grasp and convey abstract concepts in visceral ways in a relatively short period. In the context of the performance processes of Cape Town City Ballet, she referred to watching Brenda in one exercise and stated, “There’s so much more that could be accessed [...] it’s just not thought of here (she taps on her right temple) to ask” (Ibid.). I am however cognisant of how positively the management of Cape Town City Ballet responded when I proposed the workshops. This may indicate that tools to enhance the dancers’ performance processes may need to arrive from outside of the company and their daily routine. Thus far, butoh has proven to be potentially successful.

#### 4) Dianna

##### 4.1 Before the Workshops

Similar to Cindy, I had no recollection of seeing Dianna on stage and I had also not noticed her in the environment of UCT’s School of Dance. It may be that the sense of uniformity and consequent anonymity of the *corps de ballet* seeps into the overall milieu of the company as I had not



noticed her in my observation of the company's ballet class, nor do I recall her performing in my observation of the studio rehearsal of *Giselle*, in which she danced. It seems that one may remember a person after making a connection, which could be transient, such as in sharing eye contact or a smile. In my experience, with the exception of a few principal dancers, the ballet company may be described as a blur of fit, disciplined bodies. From a Western perspective, the lack of individuality may be seen as negative. In this regard I refer to Japanese notion of self and recall Japanese butohist, Kasai Akira's statement, "community is more important than individualism" (Fraleigh & Nakamura, 2006, p. 39). I propose a point of comparison between Kasai's statement and Dianna's seeming anonymous blend into her ballet community, and suggest the Japanese perspective as a positive point of departure in the exploration of butoh. At the risk of esotericism, I suggest that perhaps the common intention of individual personalities within a group creates a greater collective impact, as an individual agenda then becomes insignificant, allowing one's focus to extend beyond the limitations of the self. In the more individualistic exploration required in butoh the ability to see beyond the needs of oneself might present interesting challenges for a ballet performer who may seldom be the sole focus of attention.

#### 4.2 During the Workshops

For the first two workshops Dianna remained upright and balletic in her movement. I noticed a clear shift in her exploration of the work in the third workshop when she curled into a foetal shape and used her hands on the floor. In conventional ballet practice, it would be unusual for the dancer to lie down on the floor and caress it with their hands. As the workshops progressed, I noticed shifts in her perception of the aesthetic of beauty. In describing her experiences of the fourth day she claimed,

I found it very difficult to move in ugly ways. We spend our lives to look graceful and beautiful and now we've got to do the opposite. So it's almost like a sense of embarrassment, cause we're not used to feeling ugly.  
(Dianna David, Verbal response, Cape Town, 5 April, 2013)

However, in commenting about her exploration of love with a disfigured body she claimed,

We're trying to be beautiful and being in love isn't always the most dignified. I think that people are scared to show true emotions on stage because it's not always pretty and perfect. So it's interesting to tap into the real stuff whilst dancing. (Ibid.)

For her, butoh was completely different to ballet, primarily because of its self-exploration and creativity. I am of the opinion that because Cape Town City Ballet has largely represented iconic classical works in conventional ways, the dancers themselves have not been sufficiently exposed to moving in alternate ways, such as with African or contemporary dance. The overall training of the company remains fixed in a ballet repertoire, which I believe has limited their range of repertory. In a similar fashion, many associated choreographers<sup>90</sup> seem to be encased within a classical framework, thereby perpetuating what could be interpreted as a Eurocentric obsession in their performances. When I probed about their exploratory processes during ballet choreographies, Dianna felt that choreographers and teachers were scared to give too many details around character development. She explained, "We're so obedient, we'll be like oh, ok I'll do it like that. Then you'll have something inauthentic again because you're doing what they told you to do" (Ibid.). In terms of her developing original movement, she claimed that butoh's lateral thinking helped her to explore possibilities that were bottled up inside her muscles and mind. While still contained in a ballet body, she mentioned to have loosened, though not lost, her inhibitions. This statement made me think of the words of the Indian political activist, Mahatma Gandhi, who claimed,

I do not want my home to be walled in on all sides and its windows to be stuffed. I want cultures of all lands to be blown about my house as freely as possible. But I refuse to be blown off my feet by any. (Bharucha, 1993, inside sleeve)

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<sup>90</sup> At the time of writing this section, the company was in rehearsal with three works, namely, *Spring and Fall* (1991), *Vaslav* (1979) and *Le Sacre* (1972), choreographed by a Belgian choreographer, John Neumeier, of the Hamburg Ballet. Although this engagement does expand the repertoire of the company, it remains within the genres of classical ballet.

In appropriating Ghandi's thoughts, I believe that if Dianna's personal experience around "opening her mind to new ways of relating to her body" (Dianna David, Written response, Cape Town, 9 April, 2013) were applied to the ballet company, their alleged fears around exploration may be allayed and a deeper sense of their identity may be re-imagined.

#### 4.3 After the Workshops

Dianna was definitive in her reflection of the benefits of butoh and claimed that it aided with her lateral thinking and character development. She claimed to be more comfortable with expressing taboo subjects on stage following her experience of butoh. Understanding taboo subjects to have a sexual or violent connotation, I was surprised to discover her perception of 'envy' or 'shock' as taboo. She claimed that dancers perceived themselves as ugly when portraying negative emotions on stage. However, she claimed, "Realizing that dancing doesn't always have to be pretty" (Dianna David, Interview, Cape Town, 25 June, 2013), matured her handling of her role as a prostitute in *Camille*. When asked whether she could imagine butoh as an ongoing process, she answered without hesitation that it needed to be explored more fully. She noticed how both butoh and ballet had an element of visualisation but felt that a sophisticated thought process was not used enough in ballet and was more pronounced in butoh. She added that at a base level, butoh could be a complimentary practice to ballet. The conversation did not expand on her or my understanding of what butoh or ballet's foundational essence may be. However, I believe that both forms are danced and performed and therefore requires an expression of humanity.

## What I learnt from the Group Experience

### c) Group Responses

#### 3.1 Before the Workshops

The determination each of the participants shared in their efforts to be technically excellent was evident when one considers the amount of time spent in doing additional ballet classes<sup>91</sup>. I also noted that in spite of their alleged similarity between butoh and the techniques of their ballet teacher (outside of company activities), Martin Schönberg, they were all surprised by the internet's images of butoh, and described it as 'weird'. They seemed to be equally anxious before the start of the workshop process, and I believed that they were going to experience something new.

#### 3.2 During the Workshops

I think, if expressing imagination could be described as a process that is distinct to an individual, then it may be said that the lack of imagination is evident in how the sense of individuality is lost in a group. In the workshop, this sense of uniformity and conformity was especially evident in their sense of group discipline. For example, when given instructions, they would stand in one line, in the centre, with their bodies facing me squarely, and without my prompt, always return to a similar neutral position once the exercise was completed. Their sense of obedience did however expedite their understanding of butoh. I believe that because they allowed themselves to be guided by my facilitation, I was able to

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<sup>91</sup> Every morning at 6:00am, all of them participated in a three-hour long ballet class with Martin Schönberg, the former director of the now disbanded dance company, Ballet Theatre Afrikan, before joining their daily company ballet class at 10:00a.m. All of them were unfamiliar with butoh but claimed that Schönberg had been encouraging them to work introspectively and examine the intention behind their movement. Considering how most ballet dancers are eager to follow the instructions of their teachers, I am aware of the implicit role Schönberg had in their participation of the workshops.

primarily focus on delivering butoh principles, and deal with potential personality conflicts, such as disagreements, or personal issues, like conflicts at home, on a secondary basis or not at all. The workshops also highlighted how approaches to movement were ingrained in them. For example, I noted their struggle to balance on one leg when asked to focus on the position of their heart, as opposed to holding their core that they would normally do. However, I believe their short-lived struggle in their first attempt of this exercise once again demonstrated how closely they paid attention to my instruction and consequently, displayed openness to thinking about the body in alternate ways. They mentioned how the re-articulation of actions in introspective terms seemed to liberate their minds and thereby potentially increase their performance techniques. Another example was on the occasion of the third workshop when they did an exercise that could be associated with a yoga meditation. They seemed to be uncomfortable with sitting with their legs folded and visualising the movement of a rose with their breath. Bearing in mind that ballet focuses on straightened legs and a rhythmic response in time to the beat of music, I put their discomfort and consequent ill concentration down to their not being accustomed with the details of my exercise. By the fourth day I noted how the group had shifted from what could be considered a balletic response, to what I describe as a more butoh exploration of the work. With this I mean that each dancer had become more introspective and less concerned with 'showing' their investigation of the exercise in movements they were used to. In the exercise that expressed the death of a flower on the fourth day, I noticed how they seemed to break the balletic convention of 'controlling the centre' (sic) of the body, and played with arching their lower backs as well as swaying and contracting their hips. By the last workshop I found they had abandoned their group behaviour described at the top of this paragraph, and instead of starting an exercise in the centre, they naturally separated themselves from each other and moved to the peripheries of the room, which I interpreted as their search for a more solitary space to match their introspection. Additionally, in their verbal and written responses, the dancers used similar words to express their

thoughts. They described exercises that made them feel uncomfortable, such as walking with a deformed body, as 'embarrassing', 'awkward', 'abnormal' and 'ugly'. To describe their overall experience, they all used words like 'positive', 'alive', 'free-er' and 'happy'. To me, this demonstrated how the workshops facilitated clear physical, emotional and mental shifts.

### 3.3 After the Workshops

All of the dancers were eager to meet with me after the workshop process and discuss their thoughts. They all mentioned having experienced a heightened awareness in the workshops that was able to support their personal processes related to performance. In addition, they all agreed that butoh needed to be ongoing. It may be considered that the dancers perceived me as their teacher and therefore, may have said what they assumed I wanted to hear. Therefore, I believe that it is important to consider the sum of their responses over the workshop period.

### General Analysis

For me, the workshops emphasise five points that relate to how butoh can stimulate the imagination to shift the performance processes of ballet. Firstly, it pays lateral attention to the dancer's technique, which contributes to approaching movements from alternative perspectives. In addition, the exercises demonstrate how a repetition of non-conventional methods, could be used to gradually break down entrenched habits and organically introduce another kind of physicality. Thirdly, there seems to be a symbiotic relationship between stimulating the imagination and authentic movement, and how that movement influences one's perception of performance. It also highlights how the body and mindset of a ballet dancer in South Africa could be the site of meeting

conventional and unconventional codes<sup>92</sup>. Finally, imagination enables the dancers to embody animate and inanimate concepts, thereby tapping into their everyday emotions and deepening their sense of self and connections with their environment. If the intention were to re-think the staging of a ballet, one might, for example, imagine a *Giselle* performed with the male unable to deal with being a victim of deceit, falling into dementia and dying. With an invested butoh discipline, however, I imagine it might be possible to realise a dance performance where gendered anatomical descriptions are completely irrelevant, yet the narrative remains appropriate to the challenges, realities and hopes of individuals in South Africa. In my opinion, applying the practice of Butoh-Ballet could become integral to choreography and 'other' performance processes related to Dance.

In addition, butoh challenged the hegemony of ballet and the experiences of the dancers in the workshops demonstrated how it could complement the building of characters in ballet performance. There was also evidence of development in self-awareness amongst the dancers as well as a willingness to explore the familiar and more difficult unfamiliar concepts in performance. I believe that the dancers were able to benefit from this research because they were willing to learn. To borrow from Bharucha, I believe they opened themselves to "find those blurred spaces that bring us together [...to] find other ways of stretching the limits and assumptions of our secular selves" (Bharucha, 2000, p. 122). I believe these workshops have given all of the dancers an indication of their inherent potential as performers, and to see themselves beyond gendered, race and/or class stereotypes.

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<sup>92</sup> It needs noting that conventional codes in ballet may be relative to the culture. For example, it might be that ballet dancers in Japan have a different sense of their bodies due to cultural Zen-Buddhist beliefs, and that thinking of their bodies from more spiritual, immaterial or abstract points may be considered as a normal perspective. On the other hand, ballet dancers in South Africa may have more of a Western and Christian cultural association that leads to perceiving their bodies in more earthly, material and concrete terms.

## **CHAPTER SEVEN**

### **CONCLUSION**

*More than one year has passed since the workshops. So much lies in between, and so much is still to come (jacki job, Reflection in diary, 2 September, 2014).*

#### **Limitations of the Study**

One may conclude that this dissertation is limited in its potential scope due to its time constraints and relatively few participants. In addition, the focus on ballet and the subjective nature of this dissertation may be seen as further limitations. In response to those constraints, I will borrow from the qualitative researcher, Patti Lather, who says, I offer, “a forthrightly personal and deliberately ephemeral antithesis” (Lather, 1993, p. 677). Admittedly, I felt restricted that I was only able to have an exchange with Cape Town City Ballet dancers for five sessions limited to ninety-minutes each time. I was also concerned about the quantity of information I could share over five workshops. However, the five workshops seemed to be sufficient to whet the appetite of the ballet dancers, as well as myself, for lateral ways of engaging with ballet, however small these shifts might be. At the end of their workday, the time frame of the workshops seemed to suit the psychological and physical stamina of the dancers. Ballet seemed to be a natural area of focus of this dissertation and since the late 1980s, it could be seen as a palimpsest<sup>93</sup> to my artistic and academic journey. I maintain that this dissertation has placed equal significance on butoh and ballet and recognised their mutual desire to

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<sup>93</sup> Alfred Hinkel, who was trained in classical ballet at UCT (1972 – 1974), largely guided my training in contemporary dance at Jazzart Dance Theatre. Former dancer/choreographer at NAPAC Ballet, Gerard Samuel, has supervised this dissertation. Often at polar extremes, both these individuals have added to my views of ballet.



perform and communicate something in turn. The argument is strengthened in showing how butoh could make ballet relevant to contemporary South African society. The subjective nature of this dissertation is validated through constructivist or interpretivist methodologies of qualitative research (Denzin & Lincoln, 2011). According to Professor Emeritus of Education, Egon Guba (1985), “we construct meaning based on our interactions with our surroundings” (Denzin & Lincoln, 2011, p. 103) as well as from “between the researcher and the subject” (Ibid., p. 104). In the case of Butoh-Ballet, the context of my relationship with both forms has been articulated in this dissertation.

I found further support for the validity of this study in Lather's analysis of transgressive validity (1993), which I will discuss by way of summarising this dissertation. Chapter One indicates how aspects of my background, including my education, socio-economic and political circumstances, have shaped my subjective lens. It also puts forward the idea of how butoh could help to investigate the body beyond the limitations established by colonial representations, of which ballet could be described as being typical. The chapter proposes that butoh could create more dynamic and meaningful performances of ballet. To me, this is like Lather's,

“incitement to discourse,” the purpose of which is to [...] displace its historical inscription [which I interpret as ballet] ...via [...] counterpractices of authority that take the crisis of representation into account. (Denzin & Lincoln, 2011, p. 123)

In my opinion, one way of challenging the largely uncontested terrain of ballet in South Africa, could be to explore lateral perceptions of dance techniques and skill.

I remain unsatisfied with the discourses in Dance around butoh and ballet. Therefore, Chapter Two traverses a wide landscape of literature in order to find an appropriate language for me to articulate my thoughts around the subject. According to Lather, transgressive validity “foregrounds the insufficiencies of language” (Lather, 1993, p. 685). In

Chapter Three I include the perspectives of Japanese authors to discuss how a range of factors shaped butoh's historical developments. I also note the intercultural nature in ballet's history. Moreover, the discussion demonstrates the limitations of relying on Eurocentric literature as gospel or normative. To this, Lather claims that problematising what is perceived as truth is validated in transgressive research methods (Ibid.) The chapter also points to how apartheid contributed to various inconsistencies - such as engagement with indigenous themes, Euro and Afro-centric works, funding and complex race issues, such as hierarchies within Coloured race classifications and who gets to represent drunkards on stage - in Ballet in South Africa. Lather supports the validity of such revelations by describing this kind of investigation as "concerned with undecidables, limits, paradoxes, discontinuities, complexities" (Lather, 1993, p. 686).

Chapter Four suggests that if ballet dancers were to apply butoh's intercultural and phenomenological principles to their performance, a more humanistic kind of performance may develop. Lather substantiates this hope as "anticipatory of a politics that desires both justice and the unknown, but refuses any grand transformation" (Ibid.). It proposes how butoh could re-inscribe the cultural values of ballet and create performances that connect to everyday realities. Chapter Five describes the range of empirical material of the workshops done by the ballet dancers. It outlines how they experienced inversions in their perceptions of self and reimagined aesthetics of beauty. Chapter Six notes how imagination stimulated and transformed their notions of performance during and after the workshops. With this in mind the study is once again validated by Lather's approach as it "implodes controlling codes, but still remains coherent within present forms of intelligibility" (Ibid.). I believe this dissertation demonstrates one way to challenge the hegemony of ballet with imagination, yet still remain accessible and relevant to dancers and South African society.

## Future Directions for Research

Parallel to Butler's seminal theories in Gender Studies (1990, 2004), I believe that butoh techniques might have application in Gender Studies, with possible focus on the 'unseen' identities of individuals who seem to embody gender ambiguity. In addition, it is my opinion that much work could be done in applying butoh to the development of characterisation related to performance, such as in Drama and Dance departments. I also note a personal ideological extension of butoh that relates to habitus (Bourdieu, 1986) and stems from my ongoing work with third-year students at UCT Drama School. I suggest a study in the wider area of Positive Psychology<sup>94</sup> that looks at utilising butoh to investigate how human beings are capable of contributing towards good in the world. For example, I propose looking at how an emotion, such as love, when embodied through various morphed states, might influence the psyche and behavioural habits of an individual. When experienced in a group setting, one individual might involuntarily mimic another within the group. To my mind, the possibility of effecting change by individual shifts, which may then extend to the group, and be applied to society and even the world at large, seems worthy of investigation. It might ultimately contribute to understanding how social ideological change could be realised through embodiment.

At the end of this dissertation I return to the overarching theme of my research and ask, how did the experience of butoh by ballet dancers in Cape Town in 2013 'awaken', 'make them more aware' or 'feel fully alive' when they returned to performing their ballet? These were some of the words or phrases used by the workshop participants to describe their experiences. I feel that out of the workshops even more could be read that gives ideas for future research. Finally, I relate a narrative that expresses a Japanese perspective of goodness.

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<sup>94</sup> As noted by Csikszentmihalyi, author of *Creativity* (1996) and *Flow* (2002)

According to Yoshito,

When a Japanese eats miso soup and can immediately taste that it is good, he feels disappointed. The goodness has to seep through, slowly, and reaches its fullness at the end, when the meal is finished. (Ohno Yoshito, Workshops, Tokyo, 2004, 2005, 2007, 2009, 2010)

Thus, this dissertation is finished.

I believe the nuance that butoh can offer ballet was slowly revealed. I hope I have left you, the reader, feeling satisfied. For now, I will go and while I am away, allow the taste of my Butoh-Ballet to seep through. And when it returns, please have some more.

*Ittemairimasu*<sup>95</sup>

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<sup>95</sup> A formal Japanese expression conventionally uttered when leaving the house to go to work or to school. It is literally translated into English as, to go and come back.

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## **APPENDICES**

- A    Personal    Correspondence:    Attachment    to    email    from  
composer/musician, Saitoh Tetsu, in Tokyo, Japan, to jackī job, in  
Cape Town, South Africa on 11 May, 2013
  
- B    Kudo Taketeru and jackī job in performance, *San-Nin Tango*, Aachen,  
Germany, August, 2012. (Photographer, Wifried Schüller)
  
- C    Extracts from transcripts of interviews with workshop participants
  
- D    Copy of workshop questionnaire/questions
  
- E    Newspaper article featuring Cape Town City Ballet
  
- F    Ohno Yoshito and jackī job in performance, Kazuo Ohno Institute,  
Tokyo, Japan, 2009. (Photographer, Cedric Leherle)

**A.**

Email correspondence from Saitoh Tetsu, Japan, to Jacki Job, Cape Town - 11 May 2013

I first met Ms. Akiko Motofuji when I was playing for " Hamlet Machine " by Heiner Muller. She invited as a teacher at an Asbestos Studio workshop called " Body as ICON " the head teacher was Kazuo Ohno.

After that the relation with her continued until two days before her death. I played with her at Shiseido in Ginza two days before her death.

Many people recognized her as just a wife of Tatsumi Hijikata not as an individual dancer. ( except some people like Zai Kuning, Taketeru Kudoh and myself as far as I know. )

She is from a rich family. She had been supported his husband economically for a long time. Once they run famous night clubs, strip theater etc. Tatsumi is a son in law taken into Motofuji family.

I have a lot of memories of her. The biggest performance with her was at Warsaw which was invited by a Polish artist sculptor Magdalena Abakanowicz. Ms. Abakanowicz liked the video of the performance by Asbestos studio and myself taken at Hiroshima contemporary museum. It was performed with 48 sculptures of Abakanowicz. Herself choreographed some parts saying " do not change anything. If you change, it means you change the music notes of Chopin ". The dancers struggled with it but finally did it. Abakanowicz was very excited by the performance at the outside of the big museum where her big exhibition was held.

There are two strong episodes for me. One is when we played "the Raven" which was choreographed by Tatsumi which was inspired by Edgar Allan Poe. She put the real stuffing of a raven on her head. There was 20~30 minutes before the hanging curtain of the theater raised. She crouched with the raven for the long time saying she needs the time. It seems needless and tiring but she managed to do it every time. It will never happen among young dancers nowadays.

One is just after her operation of pancreas. We were supposed to perform one week after the operation. It is produced by a heavily handicapped people's theater group. Before the operation, she called me from the hospital saying please pray for the success. Her voice sounded scared. When I visited the hospital, she was training at the rooftop of the building. There were a lot of storyboard around her bed. She said while drilling some organs will appear from the surgical scar, but she continued with her big smile.

She had spent one of the most creative and adventurous time of Japan with one of the most inspiring husband. She co-experienced the precious time with him. So she knows what is the real creativity, what is the inspiration, what is the realization of it. And I feel all of them were taking shape again in her own dance. If she had lived more 10 years, we could have seen it from her dance. Her death was too soon.

TETSU SAITOH ( double bass player and composer )



FOTO: WILFRIED SCHÜLLER

C.

**Excerpts of Conversations: video transcripts of one-on-one interviews**

6:30p.m - 13 June 2013:

Cindy: And I think it was so like nice about the work is, you know the body has so many ways to move. I think you said it in one of your lessons. You know, we kind of have our set ways of moving and that's what we do. We walk this way, we sit this way. It's like life. I mean there's so much potential to do something with your life, but you kind of get used to one groove and that's the path you're on. And it's scary. It's kind of scary to go into that different way of, and I mean even that different way of being, for me is a comfortable way of being, to a degree, it's a comfortable thing, because you know, you want to push the limits, but only so far (laughing).

Jacqueline: You mean you stop yourself?

Cindy: I'm sure I do. I mean I'm a control freak (laughs). And I'm sure I did limit myself.

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2:00p.m - 14 June 2013:

Jacqueline: So when you say that butoh helped you with your performances or, you know when you say you started processing things, you say it helped you with this role. Were there any other moments also, like maybe you catch yourself doing something or thinking about something, or did you ever look with your back, think about eyes someplace else? Or was the main thing for you that you can see someone else?

Ashley: (interrupts) I would say yes, that was the strongest thing for me. But because in butoh we are so aware of what all of our bodies were doing, like sometimes I found myself in class with this shoulder (rolls shoulder) oh, hold on, let's put it right, you know, cause that tiny detail of the body, how your hands look and things, I find that now I'm more aware of that too.

Jacqueline: You don't think that's because you're dancing longer? Or do you think that it is because, that it is after the butoh?

Ashley: No I don't think it's because I'm dancing longer, because I mean people dance and dance and they don't really grow. You only grow when you learn new things, and I feel like yes, because butoh, butoh did make me aware of what this (shows to hand) is doing, how my back is moving, what am I doing with my feet, how am I putting them down.

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6:30p.m - 25 June 2013:

Dianna: I think anything and everything is complimentary to something else, you have to make the connections between them. If you can't find the connection, then you probably not thinking hard enough, cause everything is connected in some way. You know, if it's something worthwhile doing, if there's an interesting thought process, you can always apply some principles back to something else. Cause everything is kind of, you know, it's built from the same stuff. Like we're all built from the same elements, it's just the rearrangement of them that makes it different,

matter, so everything brought to a base level can be interlinked and used to help and compliment something else.

Jacqueline: So why do you think that doesn't happen?

Dianna: Cause we're too airy-fairy and up in the clouds about (pauses) I think we, it's a lack of thinking, things are very superficial. I find, people think at a very superficial level. I mean, that's my superficial interpretation of what they're doing. Maybe they're thinking deeper but, why I think that is because they don't encourage anyone else to think at any deeper level, than they seem to, so I can only think that they're not thinking at a very deep level. Cause, if you do want to explore things then surely you will encourage other people to explore them too.

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2:30p.m - 17 June 2013:

Brenda: Troy (not his real name), he came and said (pretending to have a device on hand) look what you guys are going to do. This is (sticks her tongue out, like mocking a disabled person). So the whole company looked, well, watched that video.

Jacqueline: Really?

Brenda: Yes

Jacqueline: This is before you volunteered?

Brenda: No, it's when we're already volunteered. And they were like, do you even know what its is, and I was, no I don't know what it is, but I'm still gonna do it, you know, it's fun, do it. And then Troy googled and he was like this is what you guys have got to do. And we all like ok, cool. You know, we have to try. And so every time we had class, he'd be like, "Ok so what? Did you guys do all that funny things?" (she pretends to be disabled). Then we said no we didn't do that you know. Then we'll explain to them what we did with the flowers and then I said, basically what it did for me is it put you (touching temples), it makes you aware, and it's just, it's everything inside. Like working from the inside out and not just pretending outside. Like if you have to smell a flower, you're not (pretends to quickly sniff a flower). It's really (closes eyes) going to that place of oh, this is ok, this is how it smells, this is the colour, (refers to head with hands), making this whole story up in your mind almost. And I think it helped with, and it will still help with other roles we're doing because now it takes you to that, not just to go, oh and, cause you'll see it, when we dance. We're all (pretending to laugh) *huh huh huh*, and we'll walk past and we'll greet each other, or we just gesture (frowning) and we do all these things

Jacqueline: External

Brenda: *Ja* (yes), and there'll be flowers and we'll just look at the flowers instead of actually thinking what if it was really me walking in this village and there was these flowers? I wont just do that. I wont just walk past someone and (opens mouth wide into a smile and nods) do that. (Jacqueline starts laughing) You would actually look at the flower, or pick it up and really, be real, more real and all (again, wide mouth open pretending to be happy and smiling) than all like that. And I think that helped me. That took me to a place where I can become more, real like, to really think, like how would I do this.

D.

**Questionnaire 1**

Date: 26 March 2013

**Butoh Experiments with Ballet – Body, Truth and Change**

**1. Personal Details:**

Name:

Age:

Place of Birth:

**2. Ballet Profile**

3.1 What is your ballet history in terms of the following details:

Start:

Training:

History and present profile in CTCB:

3.2 Please expand on any/all of the above if you like:

**3. Context and Situation**

2.1 Please describe your background in terms of the following issues:

Education:

Religion:

Race:

Class:

Gender:

2.2 Please expand on any/all of the above if you like:

**4. Expectation/Motivation**

4.1 What are your expectations (if any) from these sessions?

4.2 Why did you agree to participate in this research project?

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**Questions of Workshop 3**

Date: 2 April 2013

1. What did you experience today?
  2. At which moment did you experience that?
  3. How is this different for you?
- 

**Questions of Workshop 5**

Date: 9 April 2013

1. What do you think Butoh has done?
2. What do you think Butoh can do?
3. How is this different from your usual experience in this room?



# Trio's elegant Women's Day dance celebration

**THREE'S COMPANY** comprised Jazzart Dance Theatre's *Tracing Past 2 Future* choreographed by Moekeisi Koeni; Cape Town City Ballet's *Of Gods and Men* choreographed by Kirsten Isenberg; Cape Dance Company's *Scenes* choreographed by Bradley Sheller. Presented by Cape Town City Ballet to celebrate Women's Day, at Artscape. **SHELLA CHISHOLM** was there.

NOT only was this "once off" matinee celebrating Women's Day, it also marked the first occasion Jazzart Dance Theatre (JDT), Cape Town City Ballet (CTCB) and Cape Dance Company (CDC) joined forces to share a performance.

A historical ballet/dance occasion made even more so by the fact that presently these top ranked companies are each headed by a woman.

Jacki Job is currently JDT's director; Elizabeth Triegaardt is CTCB's honorary executive director; Debbie Turner is CDC's artistic director. And they pooled their resources to give a packed opera house a taste of the various technical genre for which each company is noted.

Moekeisi Koeni used JDT's second-year trainees for his *Tracing Past 2 Future*. Although Koeni's choreography didn't match his synopsis about youth "flying to an independent state" eight highly energetic dancers easily embraced street dancing and African contemporary styles in a much improved display of the work last seen in July.

After this high-powered arm swinging, rolling shoulders, falls, turns and leaping demonstration, Kirsty Isenberg's neo-classical *Of Gods and Men* for CTCB provided a poetic elegant contrast.

In her piece for five couples and Marc Goldberg, Isenberg showcased her a talent for creating beautiful simple lines while simultaneously musically blending this ability with an understanding of what patterns and shapes will

engage her audience's attention.

Isenberg sometimes works in canon. Sometimes she works with the full cast. In other movements she uses chamber groups with Xola Putye partnering Kim Vieira as lead couple.

However it was Conrad Nusser in the corps who attracted notice for his controlled technique and stage presence.

Since *Of Gods and Men* premiered in July I have seen it several times and it has proven to be an attractive work that should endure in CTCB's repertoire.

Johannesburg trained Bradley Sheller brought his international experience as dancer and choreographer to bear in his contemporary ballet *Scenes* for CDC.

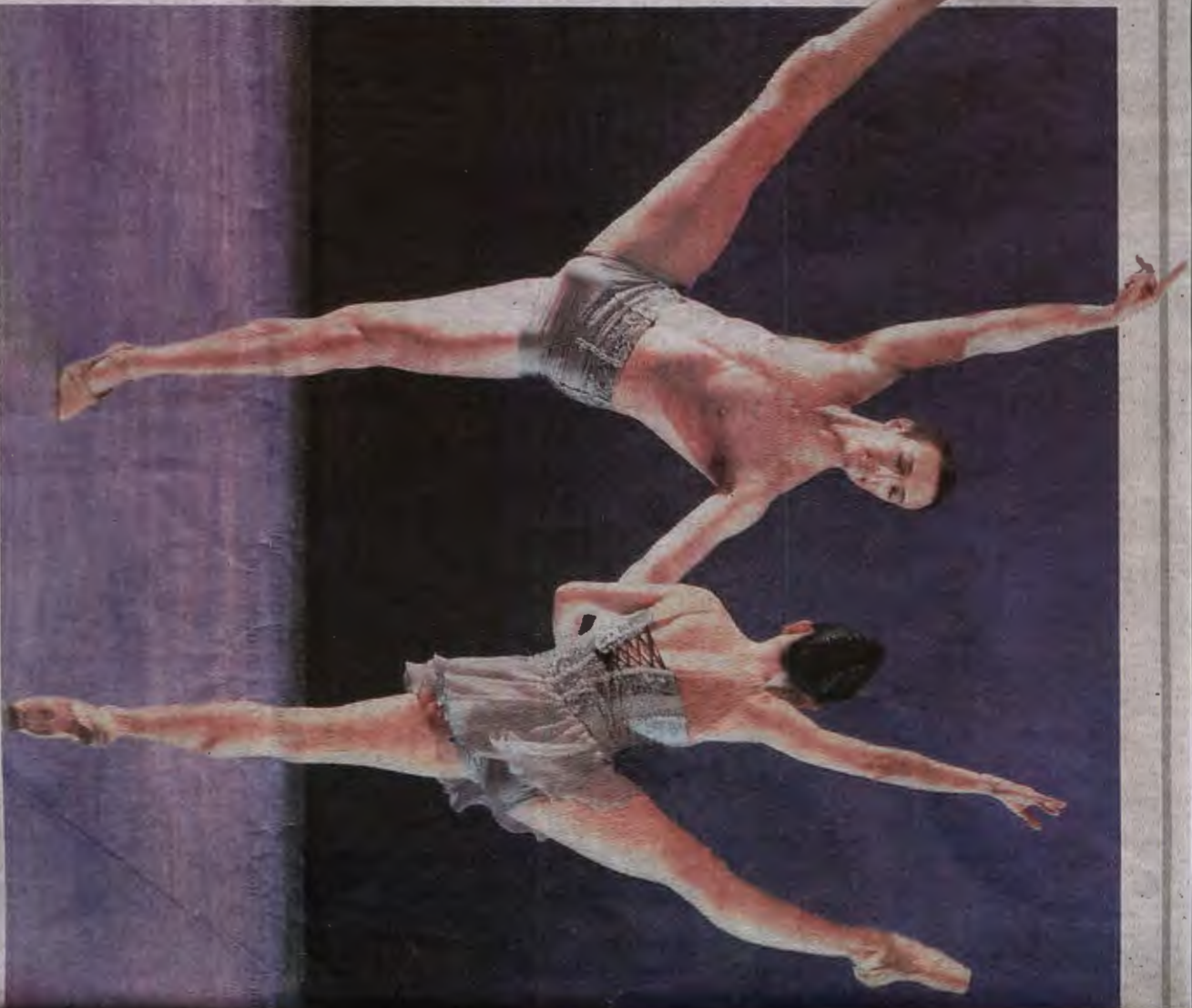
In four parts *Scenes* begins with a male trio sitting on a bench. As they fell on and off the bench, changed places at lightening speed, turned this way and that, clapped hands and thighs in unison this superbly rehearsed male trio deserved their applause.

*Girls*, is Dicky Longhurst's striking black velvet, maroon lined, skirts then took centre stage to swirl, leap, forward bend and intertwine with the men.

Set to Sheller's musical arrangements of Gallasso, JS Bach, Beethoven and Terry Riley, Sheller brought out the best energy, technique and artistic levels CDC could offer to bring this Woman's Day celebration to a rewarding conclusion.

Another woman who should join Job, Triegaardt and Turner as a leader in Cape Town's dance field is Delia Sainsbury of the Waterfront Theatre Company.

Her company recently staged *Dance Me A Song* at Artscape so although she wasn't part of *Three's Company* it must be said Cape Town's dance field is fortunate to have four such active women at the helm of their respective companies.



ON POINT: Thomas Thorne and Laura Bosenberg in *Of Gods and Men*.

Picture: PAT BROMILOW-DOW



